

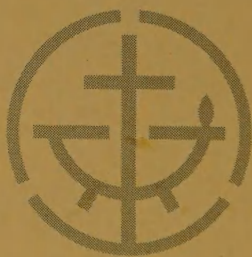
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*Minister of the City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, London.*

AUTHOR OF "ECCE DEUS," "THE PARACLETE," "THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST,"  
"SPRINGDALE ABBEY," "THE INNER LIFE OF CHRIST," "AD CLERUM,"  
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VOL. II.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

*THIRD EDITION.*

LONDON:

HAZELL, WATSON, & VINEY, LD.,

1, CREED LANE, LUDGATE HILL, E.C.

—  
1889.



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## THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES.

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A CONTINUOUS perusal of the book of Exodus from end to end leaves upon my mind the impression that there is in it the protoplasm of the whole action of God in the complete sphere of human history; in other words, I have not met with any phase of Divine revelation or ministry which is not to be traced in at least a dawning outline in this second book of Moses. Emphasis is to be laid upon the continuousness of the reading, for it is quite conceivable that a casual glance would discover a ruggedness amounting almost to chaos in the distribution of the infinite materials; a ruggedness not to be subdued, and smoothed into the general music, but by a mood of soul at once ardent and devout. Take, first of all, the personal revelation of God, the abruptest of all the miracles, and yet the most suppressed; a flame in a wilderness, barred in and made intense by branches that the wind might have broken,—and a Name as mysteriously human as the bush is mysteriously equal to the solemn occasion; then another Name not human at all, in its first impression on the mind, a Verb whose conjugation cannot go beyond a line, an I AM that doubles back upon itself and waits with mysterious patience to “become flesh and dwell among us.” Meanwhile it will leap like a spirit into the Shepherd-wanderer and find in him a rude and temporary incarnation. But the first name is the human one, and truly most unexpected and startling when we consider its import. “I am the God of ——.” Given such a beginning to find what the

end will be? Where does the Speaker begin his historical Godhood? Surely Adam and Eve will be recovered from their unaccountable obscurity, and in the bloom of Edenic beauty will be to Moses an almost rival revelation,—or Abel who died at the altar,—or Enoch who never tasted death,—or Noah who began the new world: all these surmises, so obvious because so natural, are contradicted by the fact. Abraham is the head of the new race; the larger Adam; the living Faith. God did not date himself so far back in history as to bewilder the solitary and overpowered inquirer, but placed himself within domestic associations and in living relation to names that made the very earth and sky of the lone man's little world. Thus was God quite near to Moses, yet in a moment he withdrew into Eternity and spoke as the I AM, without angel, or child, or spirit, to break his awful solitude. For what purpose is he so revealed? That he may bring to pass the most terrific collision yet known in human history. A battle is being arranged within the sanctuary of the burning bush. Egypt is the pride of the world, and her power is to be broken. No doubt her arm is mighty, but the bones of that mean strength shall be melted like wax by the fire that spares the frail bush. Chariot against chariot shall dash in war; the lightning of heaven against the iron of Egypt, so now we shall see whether the Lord's thunder or Pharaoh's noise conceals the heavier bolt. And why this trial of arms? Will the Lord set himself in array of battle against a candle which a breath might extinguish? For one reason only,—viz., that he may deliver and redeem and sanctify a people,—that his strength may make a way for his love,—that the education of the world may be moved one battle-field nearer the temple of wisdom. If God fought for victory he need never fight; he fights that he may teach; he lengthens the day of battle that he may enlarge all human conceptions of his purpose and sway with infinite persuasion every human will in the direction of holiness and truth. The details of the

mortal contest must be separately studied. How it ended may be known from the song and the dance, the passionate refrain and the clanging timbrel, the harmonious shout and the ordered rapture, which in all their ecstasy but dimly typify the apocalyptic music whose storm shall welcome the completion of the purposes of God. To the Revelation, the Battle, the Song, many an addition must be made if Exodus is as complete as it has just been supposed to be. A little wandering and chiding, a miracle or two, and then comes the first magnificent addition, the LAW! The moral universe begins to take shape. Instincts, habitudes, wordless motions, aspirations which cannot fall immediately into fit speech, now undergo crystallisation and stand out in many a strange figure as might stand the world to the opened eyes of a man born blind. A greater battle than the fight with Pharaoh began with the giving of the Law, —a subtler contest,—a strife between darkness and light. The law vindicates its own Divine origin, so exceeding broad is the commandment, so infinitely exquisite the infusions of Mercy, a mere flush of warm colour on the neutral grey of the steel statute, a tint, rather than a stain, of blood-like hue, as if an Atonement were not far away, yet the time of its agony not fully come. The Law will not have any man smitten with impunity, the pregnant woman shall be sacred from all injury, the eye of the slave shall be paid for with liberty, no man shall wantonly feed his beast in another man's field, no stranger shall be vexed or oppressed, no widow or fatherless child shall be afflicted, the ass or the ox of the enemy shall not be permitted to go astray, the innocent and the righteous were not to be slain,—a pathos so profound brings tears of joy to the reader's eyes, and so tenderly is the heart moved that when Israel cries in battle music—"the Lord is a man of war," we answer in a thankful hymn,—“his tender mercies are over all his works.” So Israel was not taken out of Egypt merely to humble the oppressor, or destroy the tyrant. The purpose vindicates the

means. The river must be turned into blood, frogs and lice and flies must be sent, boils and blains, and hails in blackest tempests of ice must not be spared; in themselves they would be but a display of dramatic violence, but in the purpose they were intended to express they were servants of righteousness and liberty and education. By such means, initially, were the evil effects of four centuries of servitude to be overcome;—the violence is the love, in adapted action. The same process is repeated in every age, with change of accidents it may be, but the purpose is unchangeable.

Revelation, Battle, Song, and Law. What more is needed? God himself will answer, so our invention need not disquiet itself. Perhaps the answer may be so expressed as to be its own proof of origin. This is the answer:—"Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." This comes after the compassionate parts of the law with tender grace. All the way God seems to have been coming nearer as the law softened in its tone almost into gospel. At the beginning of the law no man was permitted to come near; if so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake"; and now God says, as if his heart ached with some agony of desire, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." The movement is thus evermore from law to grace, from distance to nearness, from the throne to the Cross. In no rhetorical sense, or sense needed to make up halting rhythm, but in a solid and historical way exact enough in its throb for science itself, yet sublime enough in its symbolism to throw prophecy into despair. Beginning with fire, with smoke as the smoke of a furnace, with a trumpet sounding long and waxing louder and louder, who could have foretold that the Majesty thus accompanied would desire to dwell with the sons of men? But this is the effect of all true law. At the one end it cleaves asunder, at the other it enlarges

itself into new relations and looks wistfully over happier possibilities. The course of literal law is always self-vexatious. Why is the letter impotent? Because man himself is not a letter. Man is a spirit and can be ruled by spirit only. Not the Law, but the Law-giver can satisfy the soul that burns in the bush of the body. The rod smites and hurts, but not until it blossoms does it fulfil even the purpose of law. So now the meaning of the burning bush begins to dawn: it meant that God wished to "dwell" with men, to set his tabernacle side by side with human habitations, and to be accounted Father by all generations. Sinai was too high, the cloud too thick, the lightning too awful, so a house must be built, and the very building of it should be to the builders a spiritual education,—a most gracious condescension, and on the one side of it a mystery profoundly adapted to human nature by permitting man to build the house whilst forbidding him to fashion the God. In view of these spiritual and transcendent revelations, all other questions drop into secondary interest. We care but little at this lustrous point whether Philition built the pyramids, or Rameses the oppressor of Israel was the best or worst of Theban kings; in view of Sinai the avenue of sphinxes sinks into contempt, and "the petrifications of the sunbeam" look small beside the unhewn towers of the rock: not only Egyptian history but the history of Israel also assumes new valuations: it is now quite matter of secondary interest to trace the march from Succoth to Etham, from Etham to the encampment between Migdol and the pastures of Pihahiroth over against Baal-zephon, and on to the point made memorable by the passage of the Red Sea, whether in the north by Magdolon or in the south under the shadow of Jebel Attaka. The mind is in no temper for such holiday investigations, for the Lord God has himself proposed to "dwell" with men. It is of small import at this critical moment to know that the Song of Moses is marked by the usual "parallelism of clauses," and that

from a critical point of view the triplet stanzas interrupt the regular cadence with unusual frequency, for we are about to witness the setting up of the very presence-chamber of Jehovah.

The character of the book of Exodus seems to change immediately upon the announcement of the Divine purpose. Although still in the wilderness we are imaginatively amongst the treasures of Memphis, and Zoan, and Heliopolis, and Rameses, with abundance of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, and with such wealth of metal as to be able to make the very hooks of gold and the sockets of silver. The Temple of the Sun is to be extinguished by a new glory, and the consecrated calf of Ra is to give place to sacrifice charged with sublimest meanings. Is there not a subtle and suggestive harmony between what Israel had seen in Egypt and what it was about to see in the wilderness? The gods of Egypt had been well housed, could Israel suppose that the God of heaven would dwell in a mean habitation? For spiritual realisations men have to be long and almost severely prepared,—a wilderness requires a contrast. So this tabernacle is no fancy work. The sequence in which it follows is as severely logical as the point towards which it tends is ineffably spiritual. A strange thing is thus wrought in the earth. Invention is not invited, or any form of natural cleverness; the inspired house like the inspired Book employs but willing hands to carry out the labour, the Builder and Maker is God. He builds all houses—all lives—all books—that rest on the true Foundation: at first the sacred house was outlined in cloud far up the hill; but was not the universe itself thus outlined “from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, before the heavens were prepared, or a compass had been set on the face of the deep,”—was it not all wrought in mystic but palpable cloud? Did not the cloud revolve at his touch, and wheel in gyrations infinite, and cast out sparks that held in their heat the astronomic pomp that glows like a tabernacle in the wilderness of space? What

is all that upper glory, but blue and purple and scarlet, with an atmosphere for a vail, and a lamp fed eternally with consecrated oil? He that built all things is God. If he built them out of a cloud, the greater is the miracle; if he elaborated them from a molecule, he is even vaster in power than our imagination had dreamed. The nebulous tabernacle may be a hint of the nebulous universe. The most wonderful of God's visible creations are still wrought out in cloud; what landscapes, cities, temples, forests, minarets of snow, and palaces fit for heavenly kings, are to be found in the clouds, let them say who have watched the sky with the patience of love.

The meaning of all this had a mysterious relation to the shedding of blood! We come upon this revelation with a shock. The sequence is shattered by a tremendous blow. Up to this point we have been conscious of more than human refinement, and in a moment we burn with shame as if we had done some deed forbidden. So long as we were working with acacia wood, and pure gold, and blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, and stones precious as sardius and topaz, ligure and jasper, we were content, for a certain elevation moved us to nobler consciousness: but suddenly, even whilst we gaze with religious delight upon the ephod, the breast-plate, and the mitre of Aaron, the blood of a young bullock flows by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and whilst the flesh of the bullock is being burned as a sin-offering without the camp, two rams without blemish are slain, and the blood of the second is put upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and their garments are sprinkled, and the altar is bathed with the red stream; thus in a moment we who had touched with reverence the Urim and the Thummim, and the robe of the ephod blue as heaven's fairest summer, must watch "the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the

fat that is upon them," burn upon an altar whose horns dripped with the bullock's blood. The revulsion is infinite. For the explanation we must wait. Nevermore shall we get rid of blood. There was a mystery about its being sprinkled on the door-posts in Egypt—a mystery about the paschal lamb—that mystery will now follow us to the end, and re-appear in a heavenly anthem. It may be that the blood will become the true refinement, and that what we once accounted precious shall be less than nothing when compared with its infinite value.

## GENERAL NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

**I**N order to understand almost any book it is necessary to read it right through at once, without entering minutely into its detailed portions, or asking any special questions regarding its local structure. Dean Stanley was accustomed to say that he read a great work of fiction first for the story, secondly for the thought, and thirdly for the style—that is to say, he perused the work three distinct times, these being the distinct objects which he had in view in the respective perusals. It will be well, therefore, for the reader to begin Exodus and go steadily through it, with a view of getting a general conception of the outline of the history. After that he may sit down to a critical perusal of the exact purposes of the writer in each section of the work; but he will find this second perusal very much aided by the general conception derived from the first complete reading.

The best books upon the structure of Exodus that I have seen, are essays by Canon Cook, in the "Speaker's Commentary," and by Canon Rawlinson, in the "Old Testament Commentary for English Readers." If to these two essays we add Dean Stanley's "History of the Jewish Church," with special reference to the period of the exodus, we shall have a good notion of what the ripest scholars have to say regarding this section of Holy Scripture. It has been pointed out by one of those writers that the Book of Exodus consists of two distinct portions. Canon Cook shows that the first portion extends from chapter i. to chapter xix. inclusive, and that it gives a detailed account of the circumstances under which the deliverance of the Israelites was accomplished. The second part includes chapters xx.-xl., and describes the giving of the law and the institutions which completed the organisation of the people as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The Canon points out a very distinct difference in the styles of the two portions, but contends that

their mutual bearings and interdependencies are evident, so much so as to leave no doubt as to the substantial unity of the book.

The word "Exodus" means "departure," "outgoing," or "setting forth." It is perhaps needless to say that Exodus is the Latin word which represents the Hebrew title, and that "Exodus" was adopted by Jerome in his translation of the Bible.

Canon Rawlinson has pointed out that although the outgoing of the Israelites from Egypt is one of the principal matters treated of in the Book of Exodus, yet it was not the sole, nor even the main purpose of the writer to give an account of that remarkable passage of history. According to the Canon, the purpose of the author was a wider and grander one, being theocratic rather than historic. It was, in the words of Keil, "to give an account of the first stage in the fulfilment of the promises made by God to the patriarchs, with reference to the growth of the children of Israel," by tracing their development from a family into a tribe, and from a tribe into a nation. It has been strikingly shown that Genesis left Israel in Egypt a family or "house" (Gen. i. 22); Exodus leaves them a nation of about two millions of souls organised under chiefs (Exod. xviii. 21-24), with a settled form of worship, a priesthood, a code of laws and a judicature. It finds them still a family (ch. i. 1-6); it leaves them the people of God (ch. xxx. 3-13). By the entrance of the "glory of the Lord" into the tabernacle (ch. xl. 34) the theocracy is completed—God locally dwells with his people as their Ruler, Director, and Guide. The nation receives its head and becomes a "kingdom" (ch. xix. 6). It is still nomadic—it has no settled country—but it is an organised whole.

Canon Cook says that the first seven verses are introductory to the whole book. In accordance with the almost invariable custom of the writer, there is first a brief recapitulation of preceding events, and then a statement of the actual condition of affairs. The narrative begins with the eighth verse of the first chapter. The second division, from chapter iii.-vi., opens after an interval of some forty years, but from this point the narrative is almost critically minute in its statement of facts. Chapter vi. 2-27 forms a distinct portion, in which Moses is instructed to explain the bearings of the Divine name upon the relations

of God to the people: his mission to the Israelites and Pharaoh is renewed, Aaron being formally appointed as his coadjutor. It is essential to understand this portion thoroughly, as it is structurally in its right place, and has a distinct bearing on preceding and succeeding sections. "In chapter vi. 28 to the end of chapter xi. the narrative," says Canon Cook, "makes a fresh start." The next section (ch. xii. 1-42) gives an account of the institution of the Passover and the departure of the Israelites from Rameses. This section, though closely connected with the preceding one, is evidently intended to be read as a separate lesson, and, according to the Canon's theory, may possibly have been re-written or revised for that purpose towards the close of the life of Moses. The narrative begins again at chapter xiii. 17, giving the history of the march of the Israelites towards the Red Sea, the passage across it, and the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts. Then comes the song of Moses, which does not interrupt the history. In the third month after the exodus, Israel came to the Wilderness of Sinai and camped before the Mount; and in chapters xix.-xx. we read of the promulgation of the law. The remainder of the book gives the directions received by Moses touching the tabernacle and its appurtenances, and the institution of the Aaronic priesthood.

Referring to the fact that the credibility of Exodus is assailed on two principal grounds—viz., first, the miraculous character of a large portion of the narrative, and secondly, the exaggeration which is thought to be apparent in the numbers, Canon Rawlinson says: "It is observable (1) that the miracles were needed; (2) that they were peculiarly suitable and appropriate to the circumstances; and (3) that they were of such a nature that it was impossible for eye-witnesses to be deceived with regard to them." The Canon is very distinct and emphatic in his view of the reality of the circumstances recorded in Exodus. There is no mistake about such language as the following:—"Either the plagues of Egypt happened, or they did not. Either the Red Sea was *divided*, or it was not. Either the pillar of fire and of the cloud guided the movements of the hosts for forty years, or there was no such thing. Either there was manna each morning round about the camp, or there was none. The facts were too plain, too simple, too obvious to sense for there to be

any doubt about them. The record is either a true account, or a tissue of lies. We cannot imagine the writer an eye-witness, and reject the main features of his story, without looking on him as an impudent impostor. No 'enthusiasm,' no 'poetic temperament,' could account for such a record if the exodus was accomplished without miracles. The writer either relates the truth, or was guilty of conscious dishonesty." This is the only sound view, as it appears to me, to take of such circumstances. We must have no evasion, or verbal refining, or skilful doubling, but a distinct acceptance or rejection of the substantial body of the text. The Canon's remarks upon the numerical difficulties are such as he is entitled to make :—"It is to be borne in mind in the first place that numbers are peculiarly liable to corruption in ancient works, from the fact that they were not fully expressed, but written in a sort of cipher. It is quite possible that the numbers in our present copies of Exodus are in excess, and express the ideas of a reviser, such as Ezra, rather than those of the original author. The million of full age who quitted Egypt *may have been* one hundred thousand, or sixty thousand, instead of six hundred thousand, and the migration one of four hundred thousand or two hundred thousand souls, instead of two million. But, on the whole, judicious criticism inclines to uphold the numbers of the existing text. Alarm would not have been felt by the Egyptian kings until the people had *greatly* multiplied, and become formidable from a military point of view, which they could not have been until the fully grown men numbered some hundreds of thousands. For the population of Egypt was probably from seven to eight millions, and the military class, at a far less flourishing time than that at the exodus, was reckoned at about four hundred thousand. Nor could Canaan well have been conquered by an emigrant body which did not amount to some millions, since the country was well peopled at the time, and its occupants were brave and warlike. The difficulty of subsistence for two millions of persons in the desert is entirely met by the continuous miracle of the manna, and that of sufficient pasture for their numerous flocks and herds by the far greater fertility of the Sinaitic peninsula in ancient than in modern times, of which abundant indications have been observed by recent travellers. Ewald, Kalisch, Kurtz,

and Keil, accept the numbers of the present text of Exodus, and believe the migration to have been successfully accomplished by a body of about two millions of persons."

Canon Cook makes some suggestive remarks regarding the particular times at which some of the plagues appeared. He calculates that two full months elapsed between the first and second interview of Moses with the king, and that during that time the people were dispersed throughout Egypt, subjected to severe suffering, and impelled to exertions of a kind differing altogether from their ordinary habits, whether as herdsmen or bondsmen, and he rightly suggests that this was the first and a most important step in their training for a migratory life in the desert. Canon Cook fixes the end of June at the beginning of the rise of the annual inundation of the Nile, as the time when the first series of plagues began. Three months, he adds, appear to have intervened between this and the next plague. The plague of frogs is fixed as coinciding in time with the greatest extension of the inundation in September. The plague of frogs assailed native worship in one of its oldest and strangest forms. An ancient vignette represents the father of Rameses II. offering two vases of wine to a frog enshrined in a small chapel, with the legend, "The sovereign lady of both worlds." It is then pointed out that the third plague differed from the preceding in the important point that no previous warning was given. It is thought to have followed soon after the plague of frogs, namely, early in October. The second series of plagues—viz., swarms of poisonous insects—began probably soon after the subsidence of the inundation, which was a season of great importance to Egypt, because from that season to the following June the land is uncovered, cultivation begins, and a great festival marks the period for ploughing. The cattle plague is thought to have broken out in December, or at the latest in January, and is pointed out as thoroughly Egyptian both in season and in character. Next came the plague of boils, which appears to have lasted about three months. Speaking of the next plague, Canon Cook says the hailstorms followed, just when they now occur in Egypt, from the middle of February to the early weeks of March. This plague drew from Pharaoh the first confession of guilt. The plague of locusts occurred towards the end of March. The Egyptians had

now given way, and only the stubbornness of the king's will remained to be overcome.

One or two remarks respecting the account of the tabernacle may be profitably quoted from Canon Cook :—"In form, structure, and materials, the tabernacle belongs altogether to the wilderness. The wood used in the structure is found there in abundance. It appears not to have been used by the Israelites in Palestine ; when the temple was built it was replaced by cedar. The whole was a tent, not a fixed structure, such as would naturally have been set up, and in point of fact was very soon set up, in Palestine ; where wooden doors and probably a surrounding wall existed under the judges of Israel. The skins and other native materials belong equally to the locality. One material which entered largely into the construction, the skin of the tachasch, was in all probability derived from the Red Sea. The metals, bronze, silver, and gold, were those which the Israelites knew and doubtless brought with them from Egypt. The names of many of the materials and implements which they used, and the furniture and accessories of the tabernacle, the dress and ornaments of the priests, are shown to have been Egyptian. It is also certain that the arts required for the construction of the tabernacle, and for all its accessories, were precisely those for which the Egyptians had been remarkable for ages, and such as artisans who had lived under the influence of Egyptian civilisation would naturally have learned. The rich embroidery of the hangings, the carving of the cherubic forms, the ornamentation of the capitals, the naturalistic character of the embellishments, were all things with which the Israelites had been familiar in Egypt, but which, for ages after their settlement in Palestine—in which the traces of Canaanitish culture had been destroyed, as savouring of idolatry, and where the people were carefully separated from the contagious influences of other nations on a par with Egypt—must have died out, if not from their remembrance, yet from all practical application." Further on the Canon continues :—"The peculiar way in which the history of the erection of the tabernacle is recorded suggests another argument, which has not hitherto received due attention. Two separate accounts are given. In the first, Moses relates the instructions which he received, in the second, he describes the accomplish-

ment of the work. Nothing would be less in accordance with the natural order of a history written at a later period than this double account. It has been represented as an argument for a double authorship, as though two sets of documents had been carelessly or surreptitiously adopted by a compiler. It is, however, fully accounted for by the obvious hypothesis that each part of the narrative was written at the time and on the occasion to which it immediately refers. When Moses received these instructions, he wrote a full account of them for the information of the people. . . . When, again, Moses had executed his task, it was equally appropriate, and doubtless also in accordance with the habits of a people keen and jealous in the management of their affairs, and at no time free from tendencies to suspicion, that he should give a formal account of every detail in its execution ; a proof to such as might call for proof that all their precious offerings had been devoted to the purpose, and what was of far more importance, that the Divine instructions had been completely and literally obeyed. It is a curious fact that in the two accounts the order of the narrative is systematically reversed. In the instructions given to Moses, and recorded for the information of the people, the most important objects stand first. The ark, the mercy-seat, the cherubs, the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick, the whole series of symbolic forms by which the national mind was framed to comprehend the character of the Divine revelation, are presented at once to the worshippers. Then come instructions for the tabernacle, its equipment and accessories ; and when all else is completed, the dress and ornaments of the officiating priests. But when the work of Bezaleel and his assistants is described, the structure of the tabernacle comes first, as it naturally would do when the ark was commenced ; the place was first prepared, and then the ark and all the sacred vessels, according to all that the Lord commanded Moses."

I have only to recommend the critical reader to peruse the essays to which I have referred, and the commentaries which they introduce, as presenting all that the ripest learning can furnish as to the purely archæological and critical matter of this wonderful book. My object has been to discover the modern

uses to which the whole teaching of the history can be put. From time to time it will appear in the following discourses that where difficulties have arisen to my mind as to matters of merely Oriental or local significance, I have inquired into the moral purpose of the writer, and having satisfied myself as to his exact spiritual design, I have fixed attention upon that in order that I might throw into proper perspective and proportion things which, from their very nature, could only be local and transient.

# EXODUS.

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## Exodus i. 22.

"And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."

## MOSES ON THE NILE.

A VERY easy plan, was it not? Whom you fear, *destroy*; that is a brief and easy creed, surely? This was turning the river to good account. It was a ready-made grave. Pharaoh did not charge the people to cut the sod, and lay the murdered children in the ground; the sight would have been unpleasant, the reminders would have been too numerous; he said, Throw the intruders into the river: there will be but a splash, a few bubbles on the surface, and the whole thing will be over! The river will carry no marks; will tell no stories; will sustain no tomb-stones; it will roll on as if its waters had never been divided by the hand of the murderer. All bad kings have feared the rise of manhood. If Pharaoh has been afraid of children, there must be something in children worthy of the attention of those who seek to turn life into good directions. The boy who is the terror of a king may become valiant for the truth. Never neglect young life: it is the seed of the future; it is the hope of the world. Nothing better than murder occurred to the mind of this short-sighted king. He never thought of culture, of kindness, of social and political development; his one idea of power was the shallow and vulgar idea of *oppression*.

"And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives" (i. 15).

So the king could not carry out his own command. A king can give an order, but he requires the help of other people to carry it into effect. Think of the proud Pharaoh having to take two

humble midwives into his confidence! The plan of murder is not so easy a plan after all. There are persons to be consulted who may turn round upon us, and on some ground deny our authority. From the king we had a right to expect protection, security, and encouragement; yet the water of the fountain was poisoned, and the worm of destruction was gnawing the very roots of power. What if the midwives set themselves against Pharaoh? Two humble women may be more than a match for the great king of Egypt. No influence, how obscure soever, is to be treated with contempt. A child may baffle a king. A kitten has been known to alarm a bear. A fly once choked a pope. What if a midwife should turn to confusion the sanguinary counsels of a cowardly king?

"But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive" (i. 17).

They who fear God are superior to all other fear. When our notion of authority terminates upon the visible and temporary, we become the victims of fickle circumstances; when that notion rises to the unseen and eternal, we enjoy rest amid the tumult of all that is merely outward and therefore perishing. Take history through and through, and it will be found that the men and women who have most devoutly and honestly feared God, have done most to defend and save the countries in which they lived. They have made little noise; they have got up no open-air demonstrations; they have done little or nothing in the way of banners and trumpets, and have had no skill in getting up torch-light meetings; but their influence has silently penetrated the national life, and secured for the land the loving and mighty care of God. Where the spiritual life is profound and real, the social and political influence is correspondingly vital and beneficent. All the great workers in society are not at the front. A hidden work is continually going on; the people in the shade are strengthening the social foundation. There is another history beside that which is written in the columns of the daily newspaper. Every country has heroes and heroines uncanonised. Let this be spoken for the encouragement of many whose names are not known far beyond the threshold of their own homes.

"Therefore God dealt well with the midwives. . . . And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses" (i. 20, 21).

They who serve God serve a good Master. Was God indifferent to the character and claims of the midwives who bore practical testimony for him in the time of a nation's trial? His eye was upon them for good, and his hand was stretched out day and night for their defence. They learned still more deeply that there was another King beside Pharaoh; and in the realisation of his presence Pharaoh dwindled into a secondary power, whose breath was in his nostrils, and whose commands were the ebullitions of moral insanity. No honest man or woman can do a work for God without receiving a great reward. God made houses for the midwives! He will make houses for all who live in his fear. There are but few who have courage to set themselves against a king's commandment; but verily those who assert the authority of God as supreme shall be delivered from the cruelty of those who have no pity. There are times when nations are called upon to say, No, even to their sovereigns. Such times are not to be sought for with a pertinacious self-assertion, whose object is to make itself very conspicuous and important; but when they do occur, conscience is to assert itself with a dignity too calm to be impatient, and too righteous to be deceived.

How will these commands and purposes be received in practical life? This inquiry will be answered as we proceed to the second chapter.

"And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi" (ii. 1).

There is nothing extraordinary in this statement. From the beginning men and women have married and have been given in marriage. It is therefore but an ordinary event which is described in this verse. Yet we know that the man of Levi and the daughter of Levi were the father and mother of one whose name was to become associated with that of *the Lamb*! May not Renown have Obscurity for a pedestal? Do not the pyramids themselves rest on sand? What are the great rocks but consolidated mud? We talk of our ancestry, and are proud of those who have gone before us. There is a sense in which this is perfectly justifiable, and not only so, but most laudable; let us remember, however, that if we go back far enough, we land, if not in a common obscurity, yet in a common moral dishonour.

Parents may be nameless, yet their children may rise to imperishable renown. The world is a great deal indebted to its obscure families. Many a giant has been reared in a humble habitation. Many who have served God, and been a terror to the Wicked One, have come forth from unknown hiding-places. I would dart this beam of light into the hearts of some who imagine that they are making little or no contribution to the progress of society. Be honest in your sphere,—be faithful to your children, and even out of your life there may go forth an indirect influence without which the most sounding reputation is empty and worthless.

“And when she could not longer hide him, [that is, the child that was born to her,] she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink” (ii. 3).

The first going from home of any child always marks a period of special interest in the family. What a going was this! When some of you went from home, how you were cared for! How your family gathered round you to speak a kind farewell! What a box-filling, and portmanteau-strapping, what a fluttering of careful, anxious love there was! What has become of you? Were you suffocated with kindness? were you slain by the hand of a too anxious love? Truly, some men who have had the roughest and coldest beginning have, under the blessing of God, turned out to be the bravest, the strongest, the noblest of men! I believe in rough beginnings: we have less to fear from hardship than from luxury. Some children are confectioned to death. What with coddling, bandaging, nursing, and petting, the very sap of their life is drained away. There is indeed another side to this question of beginnings. I have known some children who have hardly ever been allowed to go out lest they should wet their feet, who have been spared all drudgery, who have had every wish and whim gratified, whose parents have suddenly come to social ruin, and yet these very children have, under their altered circumstances, developed a force of character, an enduring patience, and a lofty self-control never to have been expected from their dainty training. But a man is not necessarily a great man because he has had a rough beginning. Many may have been laid on the river Nile, whose names would have done

no honour to history. Accept your rough beginning in a proper spirit ; be not overcome by the force of merely external circumstances ; wait, hope, work, pray, and you will yet see the path which leads into light, and honour, and peace. The mother of Moses laid the ark in the flags by the river's brink. Ay, but before doing so she laid it on the heart of God ! She could not have laid it so courageously upon the Nile, if she had not first devoutly laid it upon the care and love of God. We are often surprised at the outward calmness of men who are called upon to do unpleasant and most trying deeds ; but could we have seen them in secret we should have known the moral preparation which they underwent before coming out to be seen of men. Be right in the sanctuary, if you would be right in the market-place. Be steadfast in prayer, if you would be calm in affliction. Start your race from the throne of God itself, if you would run well, and win the prize.

"And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him" (ii. 4).

Society needs watchers as well as workers. Had we been passing the spot at which the sister of Moses took up her position of observation, we might have condemned her as an idler standing there and doing nothing ! We should be careful of our condemnation, seeing how little we know of the reality of any case. In doing *nothing*, the girl was in reality doing *everything*. If she had done more, she would have done less. There is a silent ministry as well as a ministry of thunder. Mark the cunning of love ! The watcher stood *afar off*. Had she stood quite close at hand, she would have defeated the very object of her watching. She was to do her work without the slightest appearance of doing it. Truly there is a great art in love, and in all good ministry. There are wise master-builders, and also builders who are very foolish. Sometimes we must look without staring ; we must speak without making a noise ; we must be artful without dissimulation, and hide under the calmest exterior the most urgent and tumultuous emotion.

"And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river ; and her maidens walked along by the river's side ; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child : and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children" (ii. 5, 6).

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." When the child cried, the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh was moved, as simple and beautiful a piece of human nature as is to be found anywhere. How poor would the world be without its helpless ones! Little children by their very weakness make strong men stronger. By the wickedness of the wicked, the righteousness of the righteous is called forth in some of its most impressive and winsome forms. Looking at the daughter of Pharaoh from a distance, she appears to be haughty, self-involved, and self-satisfied; but, stooping near that little ark, she becomes a woman, having in her the instinct of motherliness itself! We should all be fathers and mothers to the orphan, the lost, and the desolate. The government of humanity is so ordered that even the most distressing circumstances are made to contribute to the happy development of our best impulses and energies. No man can be permanently unhappy who looks into the cradles of the poor and lonely, as Pharaoh's daughter looked into this ark of bulrushes. Go by the river's side, where the poor lost child is, and be a father and a mother to him if you would have happiness in the very core of your heart! Even a king's daughter is the richer and gladder for this stoop of love. Some have been trying to reach too high for their enjoyments; the blooming fruit has been beyond their stature; they have therefore turned away with pining and discontent, not knowing that if they had bent themselves to the ground they would have found the happiness in the dust, which they attempted in vain to pluck from inaccessible heights.

"Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" (ii. 7).

The watcher came without making a noise. Who ever heard the light come over the hills? Who ever heard the violet growing? The watcher, too, spoke to the king's daughter without introduction or ceremony! Are there not times in life when we are superior to all formalities? Are there not sorrows which enable us to overcome the petty difficulties of etiquette? Earnestness will always find ways for its own expression. The child might well have pleaded timidity; fear of the greatness of Pharaoh's daughter, or shamefacedness in the presence of the great and noble; under ordinary circumstances she would

undoubtedly have done so; but the life of her brother was at risk, the command of her mother was in her heart, and her own pity yearned over the lonely one: under the compulsion of such considerations as these, the watcher urged her way to the side of Pharaoh's daughter, and made this proposition of love. False excuses are only possible where there is lack of earnestness. If we really cared for lost children, we should find ways of speaking for them in high quarters. There is a boldness which is consistent with the purest modesty, and there is a timidity which thinly disguises the most abject cowardice.

"And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages" (ii. 8, 9).

All done in a moment, as it were! Such are the rapid changes in lives which are intended to express some great meaning and purpose of God. They are cast down, but not destroyed; persecuted, but not forsaken! From the action of Pharaoh's daughter we learn that first thoughts are, where generous impulses are concerned, the only thoughts worth trusting. Sometimes we reason that second thoughts are best; in a certain class of cases this reasoning may be substantially correct, but, where the heart is moved to do some noble and heroic thing, the first thought should be accepted as an inspiration from God, and carried out without self-consultation or social fear. Those who are accustomed to seek contribution or service for the cause of God, of course know well what it is to encounter the imprudent prudence which says, "I must think about it." Where the work is good, don't think about it; *do* it, and then think. When a person goes to a place of business, and turns an article over and over, and looks at it with hesitation, and finally says, "I will call again," the master of the establishment says in his heart, "Never!" If Pharaoh's daughter had *considered* the subject, the probability is that Moses would have been left on the Nile or under it; but she accepted her motherly love as a Divine guide, and saved the life of the child.

"And the woman took the child, and nursed it" (ii. 9).

What her self-control in that hour of maddening excitement cost, no tongue can tell. She took the child as a stranger might

have taken it, and yet her heart was bursting with the very passion of delight. Had she given way for one instant, her agitation might have revealed the plot. Everything depended upon her calmness. But love can do anything! The great question underlying all service is a question not so much of the intellect as of the heart. We should spoil fewer things if our love was deeper. We should finish our tasks more completely if we entered upon them under the inspiration of perfect love. The mother consented to become a *hireling*,—to take wages for nursing her own child! Love can thus *deny* itself, and take up its sweet cross. How little did Pharaoh's daughter know what she was doing! Does any one really know what work he is doing in all its scope and meaning? The simplest occasion of our lives may be turned to an account which it never entered into our hearts to imagine. Who can tell where the influence of a gentle smile may end? We know not the good that may be done by the echo as well as by the voice. There is a joyful bridegroom throwing his dole into the little crowd of laughing eager boys. One of those boys is specially anxious to secure his full share of all that is thrown: he has snatched a penny, but in a moment it has been dashed out of his hand by a competitor: see how anger flushes his face, and with what determination he strikes the successful boy: he is a savage, he is unfit to have his liberty in the public streets, his temper is uncontrollable, his covetousness is shocking: he wins the poor prize, and hastens away; watch him: with his hard-earned penny he buys a solitary orange, and with quick feet he finds his way up a rickety staircase into a barely-furnished garret; he gives his orange to his poor dying sister, and the juice assuages her burning thirst. When we saw the fight, we called the boy a *beast*; but we knew not what we said!

We call the early life of Moses a miracle. There is a sense of course in which that is literally true. But is there not a sense in which every human life has in it the miraculous element? We are too fond of bringing down everything to the level of commonplace, and are becoming almost blind to the presence of elements and forces in life which ought to impress us with a distinct consciousness of a power higher than our own. Why

this worship of commonplace? Why this singular delight in all things that are supposed to be level and square, and wanting in startling emphasis? I would rather speak thus with myself:—My life too is a miracle; it was put away upon a river and might have been lost in the troubled water; kind eyes watched the little vessel in which the life was hidden; other persons gathered around it and felt interested in its fortunes; it was drawn away from the stream of danger and for a time hidden within the security of love and comfort and guidance. It has also had to contend with opposition and difficulty, seen and unseen; it has been threatened on every side. Temptations and allurements have been held out to it, and it has been with infinite difficulty that it has been reared through all the atmosphere intended to oppress and to poison it. I could shut out all these considerations if I pleased, and regard my life within its merely animal boundaries, and find in it nothing whatever to excite religious wonder or religious thankfulness; but this is not the right view. To do so would be to inflict injustice upon the Providence which has made my life a daily wonder to myself. I will think of God's tender care, of the continual mercy which has been round about me, and of the blessed influences which have strengthened and ennobled every good purpose of my heart; and I, too, will stand side by side with Moses when he sings the wonders of the hand Divine. The miracle is not always in the external incident; it may be hidden in the core of things and may slowly disclose itself to the eyes of religious reverence and inquiry. O that men were wise: that they would consider their beginning as well as their latter end, and learn to trace the hand of Heaven even in those comparative trifles which are supposed to lie within the scope and determination of time.

## Exodus ii. 10.

"And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son."

### MOSES IN MIDIAN.

THERE seems to be a considerable gap between the ninth verse and the tenth. We parted with Moses when he was three months old, and we know nothing more of him until he became the son of Pharaoh's daughter. We wish to know something of his home training. We would fain pry into the mother's methods of dealing with such a child. What truths did she inculcate upon him? How did she explain the condition of the children of Israel to her son? Did she seek to prejudice his sympathies? Whilst he was being nurtured upon Pharaoh's bread, did she instil into him teaching that would upset Pharaoh's throne? Upon all these points we are left uninformed, though our interest is excited to the highest pitch. We like to know something of the home training of the men who have written the most famous chapters in history. There is a special pleasure in watching the growth of the sapling. The boyhood of the giant must be unlike the boyhood of ordinary men. We would see the giant in his teens, and watch him eagerly in the daily accretion of his strength. In this instance we are disappointed. Moses was trained in secret, and no tittle of his mother's ministry is put on record. Is it true, however, that we have no means of learning the principles upon which Moses was trained? Are we so totally in the dark as we have supposed ourselves to be? Let us from the history of the man gather what we can concerning the tuition of the child.

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren" (ii. 11).

A good deal of his mother's training is visible in this verse.

Moses was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, yet he claimed the *Hebrews* as his brethren. The signature written in blood was not to be washed out by all the waters of the Nile. Nature asserted herself under circumstances which might have attenuated the severity of her demands. Moses was not ashamed to recognise the Hebrews as his brethren. He himself had had a day of wondrous luck so called ; he might have sunned himself in the beams of his radiant fortunes, and left his brethren to do as they could ; he might, indeed, in self-excuse, and in order to quiet the monitions of any little unsophisticated nature which his seductive circumstances had left within him, have actually taken part against the Hebrews, and made his censures the bitterer by the fact of his alienated kinship. It was not so that Moses acted. And is no credit to be given to Jochebed, his mother, for this fine fraternal chivalry ? Is it not the *mother* who is speaking in the boy when he calls the Hebrews his brethren ? Observe, too, Moses looked upon the *burdens* of the Hebrews. Alas ! some of us can go up and down society, and never see the *burdens* which our brethren are called to bear. It is something in a world like this to have an eye for the burdens of other men. We look upon difficulties without sympathy, we regard the burden-bearer as fulfilling but an ordinary vocation ; Moses looked upon burdens as having *moral significance*, and so regarding them his deepest sympathies were drawn towards the oppressed. "Bear ye one another's burdens." A friendly recognition of the fact that a man is bearing a burden may itself help to lessen the load. It ought to have been something to the Hebrews to know that a man had risen amongst them who looked upon their burdens. Such a looking might be the beginning of a new state of affairs. There are some looks which have in them reform, revolution, and regeneration ! Is there no trace of the *mother* of Moses in all this ? Would he have known what a "burden" was, but for the explanations of his mother ? Would not the Hebrew have been to him but a beast of labour, had not his mother revealed to his young eyes the *man* that lay silently within the *slave* ?

"And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand" (ii. 12).

This is one of the first recorded acts of the meekest of men ! Do not let us be hard upon him. The impulse was right. There

must be men in society who can strike, and who need to strike but once. Let it be understood that this, after all, was but the lowest form of heroism,—it was a *boy's* resentment,—it was a youth's untempered chivalry. One can imagine a boy reading this story, and feeling himself called upon to strike everybody who is doing something which displeases him. There is a raw heroism ; an animal courage ; a rude, barbaric idea of righteousness. We applaud Moses, but it is his impulse rather than his method which is approved. Every man should burn with indignation when he sees oppression. In this instance it must be clearly understood that the case was one of oppressive strength as against down-trodden weakness. This was not a fight between one man and another ; the Egyptian and the Hebrew were not fairly pitted in battle : the Egyptian was smiting the Hebrew,—the Hebrew in all probability bending over his labour, doing the best in his power, and yet suffering the lash of the tyrant. It was under such circumstances as these that Moses struck in the cause of human justice. Was there nothing of his mother in that fine impulse ? Are we now as ignorant of his home training as we supposed ourselves to be a moment ago ? In this fiery protest against wrong, in this blow of ungoverned temper against a hoary and pitiless despotism, see somewhat of the tender sympathy that was in Jochebed embodied in a form natural to the impetuosity of youth. Little did Moses know what he did when he smote the nameless Egyptian. In smiting that one man, in reality he struck Pharaoh himself, and every succeeding tyrant !

“And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together : and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow ?” (ii. 13).

In the first instance we might have thought that in taking part with the Hebrew against the Egyptian, Moses was but yielding to a clannish feeling. It was race against race, not right against wrong. In the second instance, however, that conclusion is shown to be incorrect. We now come to a strife between two Hebrews, both of whom were suffering under the same galling bondage. How did the youthful Moses deport himself under such circumstances ? Did he take part with the strong against the weak ? Did he even take part with the weak against the strong ? Distinctly the case was not one determined by the mere disparity of

the combatants. To the mind of Moses the question was altogether a *moral* one. When he spoke, he addressed the man who did the *wrong*; that man might have been either the weaker or the stronger. The one question with Moses turned upon injustice and dishonourableness. Do we not here once more see traces of his mother's training? yet we thought that the home life of Moses was a life unrecorded! Read the mother in the boy; discover the home training in the public life. Men's behaviour is but the outcome of the nurture they have received at home. Moses did not say, You are both Hebrews, and therefore you may fight out your own quarrel: nor did he say, The controversies of other men are nothing to me; they who began the quarrel must end it. Moses saw that the conditions of life had a moral basis; in every quarrel as between right and wrong he had a share, because every honourable-minded man is a trustee of social justice and common fair play. We have nothing to do with the petty quarrels which fret society, but we certainly have to do with every controversy, social, imperial, or international, which violates human right, and impairs the claims of Divine honour. We must all fight for the right: we feel safer by so much as we know that there are amongst us men who will not be silent in the presence of wrong, and will lift up a testimony in the name of righteousness, though there be none to cheer them with one word of encouragement.

"And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known" (ii. 14).

So it is evermore! Even his own brethren did not understand Moses. Though only yesterday he had killed an Egyptian, yet to-day he is snapped at and abused as if he had been an enemy rather than a friend. But when did a man's own brethren ever fully understand and appreciate him? Jesus "came unto his own, and his own received him not." A man's foes are often those of his own household. One would have supposed that upon seeing Moses both the Hebrews would have forgotten their own quarrel, and hailed him with expressions of gratitude and trust. The heroic interposition of yesterday ought not to have been so soon forgotten. Forgotten? Nay, it was surely remembered, but that which might have been considered an honour was

held over the head of Moses as a sword of vengeance. Men are often discouraged in attempting to serve their brethren ; generally speaking, it is a thankless task. Good offices are resented, kind words are perverted, and the valiant man is hunted to death.

"But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian : and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters : and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away : but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock " (ii. 15-17).

We find Moses in early life upon the river's brink,—now we find him sitting alone by a well. It will be quite easy to interpret the feelings which govern him as he sits in a strange land. Let us overhear him : "Never so long as I live will I interfere in another quarrel : I have had experience of two interpositions, and my heart is sad. When men are fighting again, I shall let them finish as they please ; not one word will I say either on the one side or the other : from this day forth I shut my eyes in the presence of wrong, and hold my peace when righteousness is going to the wall." What a wonderful speech to be delivered by such a man ! He has fully made up his mind too ! Nevermore can he be tempted to go with the weak against the strong ! Watch him as he looks about, not knowing which way to turn. He hears sounds in the near distance. Presently he notices seven women coming to the well, and presently, too, he observes shepherds driving them away. Gloriously the late rough heroism reasserts itself ! He had promised nevermore to interfere ; but the moment that he sees another act of oppression, his mother's training makes itself felt, and he springs to his feet to resist a cowardly tyranny. The wretches, who for many a day had driven the women from the well, had never heard a *man* speak to them before ! The voice quite startled them, and they fell back unable to confront the face of an honest and determined man. So may all bad resolutions perish ! We *must* interfere. The cause of righteousness is entrusted to us, and woe be to us if we take counsel with ourselves to save our own quiet at the expense of justice and honour !

### Exodus iii. 1.

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian : and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb."

### MOSES AT HOREB.

SO ends the romance of the young hero ! We have often seen brilliant beginnings turn to cloudy endings. A man has come out very sensationally for a day or two, and then has subsided into commonplace and obscurity. But what would Moses have been had he pursued the line upon which he so vigorously commenced ? Suppose that from day to day he had gone abroad smiting men, where would the story of his life have ended ? It was but a poor way, after all, of attacking the moral confusion of society. It is not much in the way of reform and progress that any man can do with his mere fist. On the whole, therefore, we are glad that a pause has come in the destructive though chivalrous career of this young smiter. It was not amiss, perhaps, for him to knock down one or two men, and to frighten away from the well a number of cowardly shepherds ; but as a life course it was morally shallow and politically self-defeating. We must have something more fundamental than we have yet seen, or Moses will be provoking reprisals which no individual arm can resist. It is then not a subsidence into commonplace that we find in this verse ; it is going into the severest and most useful of schools—the school of loneliness, meditation, self-measurement, and fellowship with God. Fiery natures must be attempered by exile and desertion. They must be taught that the end of merely manual or military reform is unsatisfactory. Men can be held by the throat only so long as they are unable to take revenge ; but they may be held by the heart evermore. All true reforms and all beneficent masteries are essentially *moral*. We must

exchange rough and romantic chivalry for the deep, calm, vital revelation which emancipates and purifies the spiritual nature of mankind. This is no anti-climax in the history of Moses! Moses has been looking upon the outside of things; now he must be trained to estimate *spiritual* forces and values.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (iii. 2).

A beautiful conjunction of the natural and supernatural. A bush burned into a sanctuary! Though the heavens cannot contain the Great One, yet he hides himself under every flower, and makes the broken heart of man his chosen dwelling-place. So great, yet so condescending; infinite in glory, yet infinite in gentleness. Wherever we are, there are gates through nature into the Divine. Every bush will teach the reverent student something of God. The lilies are teachers, so are the stars, so are all things great and small in this wondrous museum, the universe! In this case it was not the whole mountain that burned with fire; such a spectacle we should have considered worthy of the majesty of God; it was only the *bush* that burned: so condescendingly does God accommodate himself to the weakness of man. The whole mountain burning would have dismayed the lonely shepherd; he who might have been overwhelmed by a blazing mountain was attracted by a burning bush.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" (iii. 3, 4).

Many a man has been led through the gate of curiosity into the sanctuary of reverence. Moses purposed but to see a wonderful sight in nature, little dreaming that he was standing as it were face to face with God. Blessed are they who have an eye for the startling, the sublime, and the beautiful in nature, for they shall see many sights which will fill them with glad amazement. Every sight of God is a "great sight"; the sights become little to us because we view them without feeling or holy expectation. It was when the Lord saw that Moses *turned aside to see* that he called unto him and mentioned him by name. This is indeed a

great law. If men would turn aside to see, God would surely speak to them. But we do not do this. We pass by all the great sights of nature with comparative indifference, certainly, as a general rule, without reverence. The sea wants to speak to us, but we listen not to its sounding voice; the stars are calling to us, but we shut them out; the seasons come round to tell their tale, but we are pre-occupied with trifling engagements. We must bring so much with us if we would put ourselves into healthful communion with nature: we must bring the seeing eye, the hearing ear, and the understanding heart: we must, at all events, be disposed to see and hear, and God will honour the disposition with more than expected blessing.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (iii. 5, 6).

Curiosity must not become familiarity. The difference between the creature and the Creator must always be infinite. Is not *all* ground holy? Is not God everywhere? Certainly so; yet it hath pleased God to mark special lines and special places as peculiarly holy. We are not to treat all places alike. Every successful appeal to man's reverence, redeems him from vulgarity. When a man loses his sense of religious awe, he has exhausted the supreme fountain of spiritual joy. He then measures everything by himself: he is to himself as God, and from the point of self-idolatry he will speedily sink to the point of self-despair. It is only the *good* man who can be satisfied from himself, and this is only because goodness has its very root in God.

In what a tender manner God reveals himself to the lonely shepherd! He does not say, I am the God of majesty, of eternity, whose habitation is unapproachable, and whose power is infinite. He says, "I am the God of thy father." Could any designation have been more tender? Was it not precisely the best way to arrest the attention and conciliate the confidence of Moses? "I am the God of thy father,"—the God of thy home, the God of thy fireside, the God around whose name cluster the tenderest and purest associations of life. Who can stoop so condescendingly as God? Again and again in this conference with Moses, God

declared himself to be the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is thus the God of generations, the God of individuals, and also the God of the whole human family. There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the idea that God is the God of the father, and of the son, and of all their descendants; thus the one God makes humanity into one family; we live in different zones, and acknowledge the sovereignty of different political kings, yet all nations are one, in so far as they worship and serve the same living God.

"Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (iii. 9, 10).

In the eighth verse God says, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians," and in the tenth verse he says, "I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people." Is there not a discrepancy here? If God himself came down to do a work, why did he not go and do it personally? One word from him would surely have done more for the cause which he had espoused than all the words which the most gifted of his creatures could have used. Looking at this episode as standing entirely alone, it does undoubtedly appear most remarkable that God did not personally execute what he had personally conceived. The thinking was his, so was the love; all the spiritual side of the case belonged exclusively to God; yet he calls a shepherd, a lonely and unfriended man, to work out with painful elaboration, and through a series of most bewildering and discouraging disappointments, the purpose which it seems he himself might have accomplished by a word. We find, however, that the instance is by no means an isolated one. Throughout the whole scheme of the Divine government of the human family, we find the principle of *mediation*. God speaks to man through man: he did so throughout the history of the Old Testament, and he does so to-day in the gospel of his Son. Undoubtedly this is most mysterious. To our imperfect understanding, it would seem that the direct personal revelation of his presence and glory would instantly secure the results which are so desirable, and yet so doubtful. It is here that Faith must

lead, because Reason cannot see the advantages which—to ourselves as men, when employed as ministers of God to each other, to our intellectual progress, and to our moral nature—are obvious and inestimable. God educates and glorifies us by making us his servants. We learn the highest wisdom and the highest music by repronouncing the words which we have received from the lips of God. Moreover, this principle of individual selection in the matter of all great ministries is in keeping with the principle which embodies in a single germ the greatest forests. It is enough that God gives the one acorn; man must plant it and develop its productiveness. It is enough that God gives the one idea; man must receive it into the good soil of his love and hope, and encourage it to tell all the mystery of its purpose. So God calls to himself, in holy solitude, one man, and puts into the heart of that man his own gracious purpose, and commissions him to expound this purpose to his fellow-men. God never works from the many to the one; he works from one to the many.

“And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (iii. 11).

No wonder that he so inquired. The message seemed to be so much greater than the messenger. Moses herein disclosed the right spirit in which the communications of Heaven are to be received. It is under such circumstances that weakness is strength. When a man can set himself in imagination upon an equality with God, and receive the messages of God as if they were but common words, he is no longer fit to be a minister of light and hope to nations groaning in sorrow, and perishing under oppression. If Moses had not seen the greatness of the proposed ministry, he would not have felt his own inability to discharge it. The idea was too much for him. The proposition blinded him like a sudden and intolerable light. Men are the better for this humiliation of their self-esteem. Moses was fully equal to the humble duty which he had undertaken under Jethro his father-in-law, but to go forth as the emancipator of an oppressed nation seemed to overweigh and mock his powers. He works best who magnifies his office. Preachers, teachers, emancipators, and all ministers of good, should see their work to be infinitely greater than themselves, if they would work at the highest point of energy.

Let a man suppose his work to be easy, to be beneath him, to be unworthy of his talents, and he will work flippantly, without taxing his strength or making any drain upon the life of his heart. He will not be a worker ; at best he will be but a fussy idler in the great field overgrown with the weeds and tares sown by the power of evil.

"And he said, Certainly I will be with thee" (iii. 12).

God thus puts himself apparently into a secondary position. Moses is to stand at the front, and, so far as publicity is concerned, to incur the whole responsibility of the proposed movement. It was easy for Moses to say that he was prompted of God to make certain representations to Israel and Pharaoh, but how were they to be convinced that Moses was servant and not master ? This is the difficulty of all the highest service of life, namely, that the spiritual is *invisible*, and yet omnipotent ; public attention is fixed upon the human agent, and professions of spiritual inspiration and impulse are treated with distrust, if not with contempt, by the most of mankind. It is the *invisible* Christ who is with the Church. Were he present manifestly, it is supposed that greater results would accrue from Christian service ; but the supposition must be mistaken, inasmuch as he to whom such service is infinitely dearer than it ever can be to ourselves has determined the manner of Christian evangelisation. What, then, is the great duty and privilege of the Church ? *It is to realise the presence and influence of the Invisible.* The Church is actually to see the *Unseen*. There is another vision beside the vision of the body ; faith itself is sight ; and where faith is complete, there is a consciousness of God's presence throughout our life and service which amounts to a distinct vision of God's personal presence and government.

This incident has brought very closely before me the mystery of what may be termed the Spirit of Destiny. Moses has been, as it were, audibly and visibly called to service and invested with authority. A keen pleasure would seem to attach to experiences of that kind. Surely it was a blessed thing to speak face to face with God, and to go straight away from the communing to do the work which had been prescribed. The directness of the interview, the absence of all second causes and instrumentalities has

about it a solemnity which profoundly affects the heart. But is my destiny less Divine because it has been revealed to me under conditions which seem to separate widely between the Creator and the creature? Has God only one method of working in revealing to a man what that man's work in life is intended to be? We do not always see the fountain; sometimes we have to be content to drink at the stream. The danger is lest we imagine the stream created itself, forgetting in our irreligion and folly that the stream is impossible apart from the fountain. A man is sometimes awakened to his destiny by his fellow-men. In other cases a man's destiny seems to be determined by what he calls his circumstances or his environment. But why this wide and circuitous way of putting the case to the mind? We do not depose God by mistaking the origin of our action; we do but show the poorness of our own judgment, or the want of justice which impoverishes our lives of their best qualities. Every man should put to himself the question—What is my destiny? What does God mean me to be and to do in the world? This inquiry should shape itself into a tender and continual prayer which will not cease its intercession until a gracious answer gives assurance to the heart that the will of Heaven has been made clear. It is a most pitiful thing that a man should read of Moses being Divinely called to certain service, and forget that he himself is also a subject of the Divine government. If God called any one man to special work, we are entitled to reason upon the basis of that fact that God has a special work for every man to do. It is in our power to turn such miracles into gracious common-places by seeking for their repetition in our own lives. It is impossible that God has called us into existence without having some purpose for us to work at within the limit of time. To be here at all is to be in possession of a destiny. It is, indeed, an awful power with which we are endowed, that we can shut our eyes to destiny which is beckoning us to duty, and can, indeed, so pervert and misinterpret circumstances as to press them into a justification of self-will and apostasy. To know that my life may be called to a unique vocation excites me with very tender and anxious emotion. What if I have mistaken the Divine will? What if I am pursuing the wrong road? What if I have been judging by appearances and neglecting the teaching of reality?

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Has self-interest determined my action? Has self-indulgence wrought its unholy spell upon my energies and affections? Have I been earnestly listening to hear the voice which teaches men the way of duty and the path of sacrifice? Spirit of the Living God, reveal my destiny to me, though it mean pain and loss, continual discipline of fear, or the blessed experience of daily joy. If I may but know thy purpose, such knowledge shall itself be inspiration and defence.

### Exodus iii. 13, 14.

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

### MOSES EXCUSES HIMSELF.

THE wisdom of Moses is seen in the nature of the inquiry which he proposed. He was resolved not to go a warfare at his own charges. Every man should know upon *whose* business he is going in life. Who is sending me? is an inquiry which a man should put to himself before venturing upon any course that is doubtful, hazardous, or experimental. Moses wished to be able to identify the *personal* authority of his mission. It was not enough to have a message, he must also know the name of the Author. There are some doctrines which are independent of personality; there are others which depend upon personality for their authority and beneficence. Amongst the latter are all religious doctrines and appeals. The Giver is greater than the gift. The Speaker is greater than the speech. To know the Speaker is to have deep insight into the meaning of the words spoken. The answer returned to Moses was the sublimest reply ever made to reverent inquiry. God announces himself as Personal, Independent, Self-existent. There is no word to qualify or limit his personality—it is, so to speak, pure *being*—it is infinite life—it is the fountain out of which all other lives start on their little course. Mark the comprehensiveness of the name. It relates not only to being, but to *character*, to self-completeness; it is the ONE life which can live without dependence and without society. The element of sublimity must be found in religion; the measure of the sublimity is the measure of the condescension. A man proceeding to his work under the influence of such a revelation as was

granted to Moses must be superior to hardship and triumphant in the presence of difficulty. A man's inspiration should always be in excess of the duty which is imposed upon him. The inspired man descends upon his work and conducts his service with an overplus of power ; but he whose inspiration falls below his duty toils fretfully and unsuccessfully, and eventually becomes the prey of the spirit of the hireling. It is here that the Christian worker actually triumphs in his labour, and rejoices even in persecution and tribulation : God the Holy Ghost is in him, and so the whole tone of his life is infinitely superior to the influences which seek to distract his attention and baffle his energy. In the absence of God the Holy Ghost, Christian service becomes a toil, and ends in failure and mortification : but under the influence of the life-giving and light-giving Spirit of God, sorrow itself is turned into joy.

Notwithstanding this revelation, Moses was unable to overcome his infirmity ; he still doubted, as well indeed he might, in the presence of such a vocation as had probably never been addressed to man. Let us listen to his excuses, and we shall see how unbecoming it would be on our part to sneer at a man upon whom the Divine burden pressed so heavily. Moses himself was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, nor did he doubt the authority with which he had been charged ; but a difficulty presented itself from the other side. Moses thus puts the case :

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me nor hearken unto my voice : for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee " (iv. 1).

Human distrust is a difficulty which every preacher, teacher, and holy labourer has to encounter. All great movements are carried by consent of parties. God himself cannot re-establish moral order without the concurrence of the powers that have rebelled against his rule. Moses had difficulty to fear on the side of Israel, as well as on the side of Pharaoh. His message was to be addressed, in the first instance, to the children of Israel. The tidings of their proposed deliverance might be too much for their faith. They had been the sufferers of so many terrors and disappointments,—they had been so long buried in the darkness of despair,—that the gospel of emancipation might appear to them to be but a mocking dream. What if they should hear the message

of Moses, and treat it in a spirit of unbelief? The suggestion of Moses was not at all unreasonable. He will work none the less effectively for putting these preliminary inquiries, provided he does not carry them to the point of excess. So long as they come out of a humble and reverent spirit, God will answer them with gracious patience; but should they become degraded into mere excuses, or discover a cowardly spirit, the patience of God will become a flame of judgment. After all, the spiritual labourer has less to do with the unbelief of his hearers than with the instruction and authority of God. We have to ascertain what God the Lord would have us say, and then to speak it simply, distinctly, and lovingly, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The preacher must prepare himself for having doubts cast upon his authority; and he must take care that his answer to such doubts is as complete as the authority itself. God alone can give the true answer to human doubt. We are not to encounter scepticism with merely ingenious replies and clever arguments, but in the power and grace of the living God.

Moses, having being furnished with signs by which to convince the children of Israel that he was the messenger of God sent to redeem them from the oppression of Egypt, might be supposed to be fully qualified for his mission. Surely, there is now an end of inquiry and debate upon his part. Not so, however; Moses fell back upon his own unworthiness.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (iv. 10-12).

Moses has now descended from the high level of the argument, and narrowed the case into one of mere human personality. He has forgotten the promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." The moment we get away from Divine promise and forget great principles, we narrow all controversy and degrade all service. Self-consciousness is the ruin of all vocations. Let a man look into himself, and measure his work by himself, and the movement of his life will be downward and exhaustive. Let him look away from himself to the Inspirer of his life, and the Divine reward of his labours, and he will not so much as see the

difficulties which may stand ever so thickly in his way. Think of Moses turning his great mission into a question which involved his own eloquence! All such reasoning admits of being turned round upon the speaker as a charge of foolish if not of profane vanity. See how the argument stands: "I am not eloquent, and therefore this mission cannot succeed in my hands," is equivalent to saying, "I am an eloquent man, and, therefore, this undertaking must be crowned with signal success." The work had nothing whatever to do with the eloquence or ineloquence of Moses. It was not to be measured or determined by his personal gifts: the moment, therefore, that he turned to his individual talents, he lost sight of the great end which he was called instrumentally to accomplish. How sublime is the rebuke of God! Cannot the Maker of man's mouth touch with eloquence the lips which he has fashioned? What is human eloquence but the expression of Divine music? Pedantic rhetoricians may fashion rules of their own for the refinement of human speech, but he who waits diligently upon God, and whose purpose is to know the will of God that he may speak it to men, will be entrusted with an eloquence rhythmic as the sea, and startling as the thunder. Rhetoric is the gift of God. Eloquence is not a merely human attainment. The secret of convincing and persuasive speech is put into the hearts of those who forget themselves in their homage to God and truth. Moreover, God condescended so far to the weakness of Moses as to find for him a coadjutor in his mission to the children of Israel and to the king of Egypt. Aaron could speak well. Moses was a thinker; Aaron was a speaker. Aaron was to be to Moses instead of a mouth, and Moses was to be to Aaron instead of God. Thus one man has to be the complement of another. No one man has all gifts and graces. The ablest and best of us cannot do without our brother. There is to be a division of labour in the great work of conquering the world for God. The thinker works; so does the speaker, so does the writer. We are a chain; not merely isolated links; we belong to one another, and only by fraternal and zealous co-operation can we secure the great results possible to faith and labour. Some men are fruitful of suggestion. They have wondrous powers of indication: but there their special power ends. Other men have great gifts of *expression*; they can put thoughts

into the best words ; they have the power of music ; they can charm, fascinate, and persuade. Such men are not to undervalue one another ; they are to co-operate as fellow-labourers in the kingdom of God.

Here we leave the region of the miraculous and come into relations with which we are painfully familiar. Man excusing himself from duty is a familiar picture. It is not a picture indeed ; it is a personal experience. How inventive we are in finding excuses for not doing the will of God ! How falsely modest we can become ! depreciating ourselves, and putting ourselves before God in a light in which we could never consent to be put before society by the criticism of others. Is not this a revelation of the human heart to itself ? We only want to walk in paths that are made beautiful with flowers, and to wander by streams that lull us by their own tranquillity. Nerve, and pluck, and force we seem to have lost. In place of the inventiveness of love we have the inventiveness of reluctance or distaste. It should be our supreme delight to find reasons for co-operating with God, and to fortify ourselves by such interpretations of circumstances as will plainly show us that we are in the right battle, fighting on the right side, and wielding the right weapon. The possibility of self-deception is one of the most solemn of all subjects. I cannot question the sincerity of Moses in enumerating and massing all the difficulties of his side, of the case. He meant every word that he said. It is not enough to be sincere ; we must have intelligence and conscience enlightened and enlarged. Mistakes are made about this matter of sincerity ; the thing forgotten being that sincerity is nothing in itself, everything depending upon the motive by which it is actuated and the object towards which it is directed. The Church is to-day afflicted with the spirit of self-excusing :—it cannot give, because of the depression of the times ; it cannot go upon its mighty errands, because of its dainty delicateness ; it cannot engage in active beneficence, because its charity should begin at home ; it cannot enter into ardent controversy, because it prefers the comfort of inaction. Churches should not tell lies to themselves. The first great thing to be done is for a man to be faithful to his own heart, to look himself boldly in the face, and speak the clear truth emphatically to his own consciousness.

## Exodus iv. 21.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return unto Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand : but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

### MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH.

THERE are of course many difficulties, by us insoluble, in connection with the sovereignty of God. This must be distinctly recognised, and no man must expect to have all mysteries dwarfed to the measure of his own understanding. The greatest of all mysteries is God himself, yet we are not therefore to doubt his existence, or to deny his loving providence. The mere fact of any question being mysterious does not in any way affect its truthfulness. There are mysteries which are *against* reason, and there are mysteries which are *above* reason. It is in full view of these principles that we discuss this difficult subject.

Looking at human history generally in relation to Divine sovereignty, three things are clear:—

First : *That all nations are not equally honoured.* This difference amongst the nations, let it not be considered trite to say, is not made by the Bible, or by any system of theology ; it is simply a matter of fact, whatever may be our views respecting either God or the Bible. One nation is highly civilised, another is in the lowest condition of barbarism ; yet all the nations are under the government of the same gracious God. Every day the sun sees some nations worshipping the true Spirit, and others bowing down before idols ; yet all people, let it be repeated, are under the government of the same Creator. This is pointed out as a mere matter of fact, and as presenting the gravest possible difficulties, whatever may be the theological or philosophical theory by which we regulate our observation of human affairs.

Second : *That all individuals are not equally endowed.* We are

all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man. The poetic dreamer and the prosaic clown; the daring adventurer and the self-regarding coward; the child of genius and the creature of darkness; yet all claim to be men, and all may theoretically acknowledge the same God and Redeemer. These are facts with which we have to deal whether we open the Bible or not, whether we acknowledge a system of Divine Providence or not, whether we are atheists or saints.

Third: *That Divine judgment is regulated by Divine allotment.* Here we open the Bible, in which we find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which have enjoyed a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. The heathen are a law unto themselves. Five talents are expected to produce more than two. The Divine plan of judgment therefore is not arbitrary, but moral. If we lose hold of this principle, we shall see confusion where we might see the order of righteousness. First of all, and last of all, it must be our settled and unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or he is no longer God. Everything must perish which opposes this law. We are not, however, to look at incomplete cases, and regard them as final criteria by which to test the wisdom and righteousness of the Almighty. In many cases we shall have to repress our impatience, and calmly to wait until fuller light is granted.

So much for general principles; let us now look at the particular instance before us, and in doing so we must at the outset clearly mark the limits of the ground which it occupies. The children of Israel were under the sovereign control of the king of Egypt. In some sense he had property in them. They were his bondsmen, delivered into his hands, and subject to his government. His relation to them was distinctly that of a political ruler; not based upon theological antipathies. He did not maltreat the Israelites because of their religious opinions. Pharaoh was a king, and it was strictly in his royal capacity that he dealt with the question of Israelitish bondage. Suddenly, to himself, Moses and Aaron proposed in the name of the Lord God of Israel that Pharaoh should let the people go to hold a religious

feast in the wilderness. Pharaoh was of course startled. As a pagan he did not acknowledge the name or government of the God of Israel. A political petition was addressed to him, and he dealt with it on political grounds. It was not a spiritual question which was proposed to Pharaoh. It was not a question which involved his own personal salvation, or his own relation to the great future; it was purely, simply, and exclusively a political question: It was, therefore, within this sphere that the Divine action was taken, and that action is fitly described as a hardening of Pharaoh's heart. We do not attempt to modify the words, or in any sense to gloss them over; we accept them in their plain and obvious signification. The question now arises, what the meaning of that hardening was, and what useful results accrued from a process which appears to us to be so mysterious. We have already laid down the fundamental and eternal principle that God must do right, and that, consequently, however mysterious may be the processes through which he moves, his purpose is infinitely just. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart, as involving the development of a merely political scheme, may amount in effect to no more than this,—“I will delay the process; this request shall not be granted at once; and I prolong the process in order that I may bring out lessons for Pharaoh himself, for the children of Israel, and for mankind at large: were Pharaoh to let the children of Israel escape from him at once, the result would be mischievous to themselves; therefore, in mercy, not in anger, I will harden Pharaoh's heart.” This is eminently reasonable, and has been found to be so in our own experience. When men have snapped at their blessings, and instantly secured all their purposes, they have undervalued the advantages which have been thus realised. There is a hardening that is really merciful. “God cursed the ground for man's sake.” Instead of the word *cursed*, insert the word *hardened*, and you will see what is meant by a hardening process taking place at the suggestion of a merciful disposition. God hardened the ground for man's sake; God hardened Pharaoh's heart for the sake of all parties involved: by delaying the result, he urged and exemplified lessons which could not have been successfully inculcated in any other way.

So far, the question is not a moral one, except in the degree

in which *all* questions have more or less of a moral bearing. It has been supposed by some that in the case of this exercise of Divine sovereignty, the sum total of Pharaoh's wickedness was increased. This, however, was by no means the case. There is the greatest possible difference between wickedness being focalised, and wickedness being increased. Let us then assume that it was altogether a moral question, and show that the sovereignty of God did in no wise add to the iniquity of Pharaoh. It is possible for a man to become virtuous in one direction, that he may concentrate his wickedness in another. Here, for example, is a man who has been notoriously indolent, intemperate, or otherwise evil-disposed;—by some means that man becomes energetic, self-controlled, and apparently attentive to some discipline which has a good moral effect upon him; looked at outwardly, it is evident that a beneficial transformation has taken place upon him. What, however, is the reality of the case? The man has actually put himself under discipline, that he may prepare for a prize-fight! He has made his very virtues contribute to the purposes of his vice. Instead of his wickedness being distributed over large spaces of his life, it is gathered up and expressed in one definite act. Even, therefore, were we to suppose that the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh involved moral consequences, it would by no means follow that the sum total of his wickedness was thereby increased. It would only show that wickedness in its intensity; it would focalise the scattered energies of the bad man, and show their fierceness in one supreme act.

As the history proceeds, we see that the political situation enlarges itself into a spiritual problem. Pharaoh sees the wonders of the Lord, and feels the terribleness of his scourge. Under the influence of fear, he makes a *promise* unto Moses and Aaron that if the Lord will withdraw his hand, he will let Israel go. Thus the question becomes *moral* as well as political. Pharaoh makes a promise, and therefore implicates his honour and his conscience. It is to be observed, too, that the promise was made in connection with a special request for religious supplication on the part of Moses. Thus Pharaoh said, "Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice

unto the Lord." Thus the ground is entirely changed. By some means or other the moral nature of Pharaoh has been touched, and the consequence is a pledge on his part to permit Israel to do sacrifice. But was Pharaoh faithful to his word? Was he not in reality trying to turn the moral into the political, and so to get out of an honourable pledge by an unworthy strategy? It would appear that this was really the case, for "when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them;" "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." Did Pharaoh fulfil his promise? No! "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants." Thus it is clear that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and whatever may be the mystery of Divine sovereignty in this matter, Pharaoh himself is distinctly charged with the responsibility of his own obstinacy. There was undoubtedly a Divine action in the process; but that Divine action did not involve the spiritual destiny of Pharaoh.

Applying these lessons to ourselves as sinners, I have now to teach that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and that whosoever will may avail himself of the blessings secured by the mediation of the Saviour. If any man excuses himself on the ground that God has hardened his heart, that man is trusting to an excuse in the most solemn affairs of his being which he would not for a moment tolerate in the region of his family life or commercial relations. We must not be sensible in ordinary affairs and insane in higher concerns. Were a servant to tell her mistress that she is fated to be unclean in her habits, that mistress would instantly and justly treat her with angry contempt. Were a clerk to tell a banker that he was fated to come late every morning, and go away early every afternoon, the statement would be received as a proof of selfishness or insanity. Were a travelling companion to tell you to make no attempt to be in time for the steamboat or the train, because if you were fated to catch it there would be no fear of your losing it, you would treat his suggestion as it deserved to be treated. Yet men who can act in a common-

sense manner in all such little affairs, sometimes profess that they will not make any attempt in a religious direction, because they believe in the doctrine of predestination or fatalism. Wicked and slothful servants, they shall be condemned out of their own mouth! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Whosoever will, let him come." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" In presence of such statements as these, it must be the very consummation of blasphemy to turn round upon God and say, "I wanted to be saved, but thou didst harden my heart and condemn me to hell."

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#### NOTE.

The taskmasters were Egyptian bailiffs or general managers; the officers were Hebrews, and had each the charge of a certain number, of whom, and their work, they had to keep account (hence called *Shoterim* or *Writers*). When recently in Egypt, I saw this very system still in operation on a road which the Viceroy was constructing. A Turkish officer superintended so much of the road; under him was an Arab, generally a sheikh of an adjoining village, whose duty it was to mark out to his people what they had to do, and to keep strict account how it was done; and under him was a miscellaneous company of men, girls, and boys, working in a state of semi-nudity, under the discipline of the stick. The stick served a double purpose: laid along the road, it marked out how much was to be done within a given time; laid on the backs of the unfortunate *fellaheen*, it painfully reminded them, that, whether able for it or not, their full tale of task-work must be completed.

A European who has not been in the country can hardly imagine the extent to which the stick is used in Egypt. The natives seem almost to glory in it as an ancient and venerable institution. "The Moslems have a proverb that 'the stick came down from heaven a blessing from Allah.' . . . . To 'eat stick,' as a sound thrashing is technically termed, is submitted to with a degree of *sang froid* quite astonishing to European nations, and is not at all degrading in the eyes of the Egyptian."—W. L. ALEXANDER, D.D.

### Exodus vii. 3.

"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart."

#### THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

WE have already remarked upon the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; let us now look at some of the broader aspects of that supposed mystery. We must never consent to have God charged with injustice. Stand at what distance he may from our reason, he must never separate himself from our conscience. If God could first harden a man's heart, and then punish the man because his heart was hard, he would act a part which the sense of justice would instantly and indignantly condemn; therefore, he *could not* act that part. Whenever there is on the one hand a verbal difficulty, and on the other hand a moral difficulty, the verbal difficulty must give way. It is a rule of interpretation we must fearlessly apply. Let me re-state it. If ever there should be a battle between language and the instinct or sense of justice, the language must go down; the Judge of all the earth must be held to do right. The key of the whole difficulty is in the very first chapter of the Book of Exodus; in the eighth verse of that chapter we read: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." That is the beginning of the mischief. That is the explanation of all the hardening of heart. What is the full translation or paraphrase of that verse? It is this: Now there arose a new king, who knew not the history of his own country; a Pharaoh who remembered not that Egypt had been saved by one of the very Israelites who had become to him objects of fear; a king guilty either of ignorance or of ingratitude; for if he knew the history of his own country and acted in this way he was ungrateful, and therefore hardened his own heart; and if he did not know the history of his own country, he was ignorant of the one thing which every king ought to know, and therefore he was unfit to be king. The explanation of all that

follows is in this ignorant or ungrateful Pharaoh, not in the wisdom or grace of the providence of God. Whether this particular Pharaoh came immediately after Joseph, or five centuries after him is of no consequence, since we are dealing with a moral progeny—a bad hereditary—and not with a merely physical descent. The point to be kept steadily in view is that Pharaoh had hardened his own heart in the first instance, had forgotten or ignored the history of his country, and was ruling his whole course by obduracy and selfishness. That is the Pharaoh with whom God had to deal. Not some young and pliable Pharaoh, who was willing to be either right or wrong, as anybody might be pleased to lead him; an immature and inexperienced Pharaoh, who was simply looking round for a policy, and might as easily have been led upwards as led downwards—a very gentle, genial, beautiful soul; but a man who had made up his mind to forget the saviour of his country, and to bend every consideration to the impulse of a narrow and cruel policy. In this criticism Pharaoh must be to us something more than an Egyptian term. We must know the man before we can even partially understand the providence. What is the material with which God has to deal? That is the vital inquiry. God may be reverently represented as speaking thus:—This man, having hardened his heart, has shown clearly the specialty of his moral and mental constitution; he must be made, therefore, to see what hardness of heart really means; for his own sake, I will treat him as he has treated himself, and through him I will show the ages that to harden the heart is the most terrible of all crimes, is indeed the beginning and pledge of the unpardonable sin, and can only be punished by the destruction of the body and soul in hell. There is no other way of dealing with the world. Men supply the conditions with which Providence has to work.

The case now begins to lift itself out of the narrow limits of a historical puzzle and to assume the grandeur of an illustration of Divine methods and purposes; in other words, it is no longer an instance of the sovereignty of force, but an example of the sovereignty of love, and though the example is unavoidably costly in its individual suffering it is infinitely precious as an eternal doctrine. God is to us what we are to God. He begins where we begin. One might imagine that the Lord treated Pharaoh

arbitrarily, that is to say, did just what he pleased with that particular man or class of man. Nothing can be further from the truth. There is nothing arbitrary in the eternal government. It is begun with justice, in the whole process justice, in the whole issue justice. What other elements may come in will appear as the case is evolved and consummated. The Lord hardened the hearts of the Israelites just as certainly as he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and in the very same way and for the very same reason. Do not imagine that God has some partiality for one man at the expense of another. God deals with each man according to each man's peculiarity of constitution and purpose. See how the Lord treated the Israelites: "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." The marginal reading is still more vivid: "I gave them up unto the hardness of their hearts." That is to say, the Divine Teacher must at certain points say, in effect: You have made your determination, you must work it out; no reasoning, even on my part, would dissuade you; you must for yourselves, in bitterness and agony of experience, see what this condition of mind really means—"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels"—not as an act of sovereignty, arbitrariness, and determination that could not be set aside because of the Divinity of its origin; but I, the Living God, was for their sakes necessitated to let them see what a certain course of conduct must logically and morally end in. The Apostle puts the same truth in very striking language: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." "My Spirit shall not always strive with man,"—I will, at a certain point, stand back and let you see what you are really at; doctrine would be lost upon you; exposition, appeal, would be abortive; I am necessitated, therefore, though the Living God and Father, to let you have your own way, that you may really see that it was an angel that was stopping you, it was mercy that would have prevented your downward rush.

This is the secret of all Biblical providence, and rule, and education. From the very beginning, the first man started up with a disobedient heart. For some reason or other, he said he would pursue a policy of disobedience. The Lord allowed him

to do so, and the result was death. He was told that death would be the result, but the telling had no effect upon him: he said, "I will try." If our narrow suggestion of reasoning, and persuading, and pleading, were correct and profound in its moral conception, and absolute in its philosophical wisdom, Adam would not have incurred God's prediction, but instantly have fallen back from the tree forbidden, and on no account would have touched it; but philosophy is lost, appeal is a voice in the air that brings back no great heart-cry of allegiance and consent. Every man must touch hell for himself. Another man started life upon a different policy. He said he would rule by violence; nothing should stand in his way; resistance on the part of others, or aggravation on the side of others, would simply elicit from him an answer of violence and destruction. Said he, in effect, "I will not reason, I will smite; I will not pray, I will destroy." The Lord said in effect: "It must be so; you must see the result of this violence; that disposition never can be got out of you but by exhaustion; argument would be lost on a fiery spirit like yours; it would be in vain to interpose gentle persuasion or entreating prayer between a nature like yours and the end which it contemplates. Take your own course, and the end of violence is to be Cain for ever, to be branded externally, to be a lesson to the ages that violence only slays itself, and is a wickedness, a crime, in a universe of order." Another man arose, who said he abhorred violence. Issues which the soul wished were accomplished must be secured by other and wiser and deeper means. Said he, "I will try deception, I will tell falsehoods, I will answer inquiries lyingly; there shall be no noise, no tumult, no sign of violence or passion; but I will answer with mental reservations, I will play a false part, and thus pass smoothly through life." The man was of a false heart. He did not *tell* lies: he *was* a lie. The Lord had but one alternative. Though he be omnipotent in strength, he is limited when he deals with the creatures which he has made in his own image. So said he, in effect, "If it must be so, it must be so; your policy you have adopted—attempt it." The man attempted it, and was laid in the dust a dead, blighted victim of his own sin. The universe will not have the liar in it. It may find room for his body to rot in, but it will not suffer him to live. All through and through history, there

fore, the same thing is again and again demonstrated. We cannot account for personal constitution, for singularities of mind ; in this profound problem there are metaphysics not to be penetrated by human reason, and the expositor, how careful and anxious soever he may be, can only begin where the facts themselves begin. What lies beyond his ken also lies beyond his criticism. The solemn and awful fact is, that every man has a constitution of his own, a peculiarity and specialty which makes him an individual and separates him from all other men, giving him an accent and a signature incommunicably his own, and that God deals with every man according to the conditions which the man himself supplies.

But a narrow criticism would tempt us to say that mercy will prevail where hardening will utterly want success ; gentleness, tears, compassion—they will succeed. If God had, to speak figuratively, fallen upon the neck of Pharaoh, and wept over him, and persuaded him with gentle words, Pharaoh would have been a different man. That criticism is profanity ; that criticism is historically false : hear the Apostolic argument : "For he [God] saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,"—perfectly easy words, if taken from the right point of view, and constructed in harmony with the broad method of Divine providence, even as that method is known amongst ourselves. The Lord has in this way, which is the only way, shown that the exercise of mercy is as useless as the process of hardening. We have foolishly imagined that mercy has succeeded, and hardening has failed : whereas all history shows us, and all experience confirms the verdict of history, that mercy is utterly useless. We ourselves are living examples that all God's tears cannot soften the obduracy of our heart. This interpretation clears away all difficulty from this Pauline passage, enabling us to read it in this way : God has, in the exercise of his sovereign wisdom, tried different methods

with different minds. In some instances he has demonstrated the inevitable issue of hardness of heart ; in other instances he has shown the utter uselessness of mere mercy ; he has had mercy on whom he would have mercy, and whom he would he has hardened, or on them tried a hardening process ; in other words, he has let both of them work out the bent of their own mind, fulfil their own line of constitution, and see what it ends in, and the consequence is this : letting men have their own way has failed, pitying their weaknesses has failed, terror has accomplished nothing, and mere mercy has only wrung its own tender heart ; the rod and the tears have both failed. Let us wait before we come to the final conclusion. We are now in the midst of a process and must not force the issue by impatience.

So then it is unrighteous to blame God for showing men what hardness of heart really means, as if by adopting a contrary course he could have saved them ; for he has again and again, in his providence, shown that his goodness has been no more effectual than his sovereignty. This is the other side of the great problem. We pitied Pharaoh, saying, "If the Lord would but try the effect of mercy upon him, Pharaoh would be pliant." The Lord says : "No ; I know Pharaoh better than you do ; but to show you what mercy will do or will not do, I will try it upon other men." And we have stood by, and seen God cry rivers of tears, we have seen him thrill with compassion ; we have seen him make himself pliable in the hands of his own children, as if they might do with him what they pleased ; and they have in reply to his mercy smitten him in the face.

The seventy-eighth Psalm is an elaborate historical argument establishing this very point, and is the more striking that it deals with the very people whom Pharaoh refused to liberate. The whole case is thus focalised for us ; we see the double action at one view. If you want to see what hardening can do, look at Pharaoh ; if you want to see what mercy can do, look at Israel ; in both instances you see utter failure. God had compassion on whom he would have compassion, and on whom he would he tried the giving up of men to the hardness of their own hearts, and in both cases the issue was disappointment and grief on the part of God. So our little na row theory that mercy would have succeeded has been contradicted by the unanimous verdict of

the ages. Can language be tenderer than that of the Psalmist? "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." What is the upshot? They all prayed, they all loved God, they all responded to the magic of mercy? "And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness." "But he, being full of compassion"—this is the very theory you wanted to have tried—"forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." How did they answer him? By love? by allegiance? by covenants of loyalty? Read the history: "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand: nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." There mercy stands back, and says, "I have failed." Seeing that both severity and mercy have failed, what was to be done with the race? Says God: "I have had compassion on these; I have hardened the hearts of these—or, in other words, have allowed them to see what the hardening of their own hearts really means; I have thus created a great human history, and the result is failure, failure. The law has failed, sentiment has failed, the sword I put back as a failure, my tears I dry as a failure—what is to be done?" Now comes the sublimity of the evangelical philosophy, the glory of the gospel as it is known in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness and mercy must meet together, justice and pity must hold their interview; God must be just, and yet must himself find means by which he can be the Justifier of the ungodly. This reconciliation has been effected. We, as evangelical thinkers, believe in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if that fail there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

## Exodus xi. 1.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether."

### THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

THE river was turned into blood, frogs came up upon the land of Egypt abundantly, and lice and flies; beasts were destroyed, locusts covered the whole land; darkness that might be felt filled the earth, and in one awful night the firstborn died,—“from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.” And in that night of agony there “was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like any more.” Some things can only be done once; some things do not permit repetition. The magicians of Egypt could do, apparently at least, or in some measure, what Moses and Aaron did in the way of miracles: they were skilled men, abundantly clever in conjuring and all manner of dexterity. The Lord seemed to take delight in developing their power so far as it would go: but there came a time when it broke down. Do not suppose that the whole race can be run by any competitor of God. For a mile you might outrun the wind, but the wind will conquer you: for a mile you might run faster than the lightning locomotive, but only for a little time. There came a day, we read, when “the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.” When the sting was in themselves they felt themselves to be but men.

Let us look at these plagues from Pharaoh's side and from the Divine side, and learn the modern and immediate uses of these tremendous judgments.

There is a period in life when we can only see sin in the light of its punishments, that, indeed, is not to see sin at all, but that is the chronic sophism with which all high spiritual teaching has to contend, and to contend almost impotently, because of the deceitfulness of the heart. When we are in the right mind we shall not need to see hell in order to know what sin really is: we shall know it afar off, before it has shaped itself into overt evil behaviour. We should hate it as a spiritual possibility, if no stain had ever been made upon the snow of the universe. We should be so quick of spiritual imagination as to know what the sin would be—not a measurable taint to be reckoned up and named in plain inches. We should feel so sympathetically with the spirit and holiness of God as to see how one, so-called, little lie would darken creation and put out the very lamps of heaven and make it impossible for God to live. How far from that state are we? We have become so familiar with sin as to have broken it up into the plural number, and now we speak of sin as *sins*, and, once having given way to the pluralising of the word, we have missed all its gravity and all its terribleness. To speak in the plural number is to bring sin within the region of statistics. We now classify sin, distributing it into schedules and publishing what is done in separate lines; and thus we come to construct a comparative morality. When we see the punishment of sin, we think we see what sin itself really is. We must rid the mind of that most mischievous misconception. We do not see sin from any penalty that has yet fallen upon it. When Adam died, we did not see what Adam had really done. He had made the universe impossible; he had taken away for ever the happiness of God; he had made heaven an impossibility—unless there could be found in the Divine nature itself some answer profound enough, beneficent enough, to undo in some mysterious and wordless way the tremendous and infinite catastrophe. No wonder we take light and frivolous views of human conduct, when we have turned sin into *sins*, because that is the first step of a process which means a comparison of one sin with another: the weighing of one sin against another, and the distribution of sins into venial and mortal. These are the clevernesses of men, the refinements of human deceit,—not permissions which have been granted by any charter Divine,—thus to trifle with law and

consequence. Many would be struck by the plague who would not be impressed by the hardness of heart which it was intended to chasten,—hence you will hear more criticism about the miracle of the plague, than about the infinitely greater miracle of human obduracy. We miss the point: we wonder about the river turned into blood, and wonder not about the heart turned into stone.

Immediately following this line of remark comes the solemn doctrine that suffering is often mistaken for penitence. The two things go inseparably together. When we think of punishment instead of thinking of sin, we are very likely to think that suffering is the equivalent of contrition. We say "the poor man seemed to be suffering intensely." So he may have been; but there may have been no contrition in his heart. It was a physical or mechanical suffering, not a moral pain; ■ spiritual agony, a revulsion of the soul against the terribleness of sin. Such ideas, perhaps, never occurred to the offender, but when the darkness turns creation into night, when he goes out for water, and is forced to drink blood, when he cannot put down his foot because of the abundance of the insects which cover the ground, then he begins to whimper, and to cry, and to say that things are going hard with him; and when we see him with bent head and eyes all tears, we say pensively "the poor creature did seem to be suffering so much." So he was; but the suffering was in the wrong place. He cried out because of fear; he cried because he was a coward,—not because he was a sinner. A man has done something in society which he ought not to have done: he is brought before the judge and condemned to imprisonment and servitude. The circumstances being wholly unfamiliar, the man is cowed by them,—the days are long, the nights are burdens, the whole time is charged with intensest suffering; so the man breaks down and is sorry for what he has done. That is a mistake. No man can be made sorry by punishment, except in the narrowest and most trifling degree. We do not begin to be sorry until we feel that one false word, one wrong deed, has spoiled the universe, and grieved the Spirit of the living God, no matter what the weight is upon our heads, or the laceration upon our backs—no matter how we are overwhelmed by mere suffering. We must distinguish between the coward and the

sinner, the sinner that cries out and the soul that would repeat the offence if the punishment could be escaped. Until we get down to these vital lines we never can begin our first lesson in gospel theology. How easy it is to mistake mercy for weakness ! This was Pharaoh's mistake. The moment the Lord lifted his heavy hand from the Egyptian king, Pharaoh began to forget his oath, and vow, and promise, and to harden his heart,—saying, in effect, "He can do no more ; the God of the Israelites has exhausted himself ; now that he has removed his hand he has confessed his weakness rather than demonstrated his pity." We are committing the same mistake every day : whilst the plague is in the house we are ready to do anything to get rid of it ! we will say prayers morning, noon and night, and send for the holy man who has been anointed as God's minister, and will read nothing but solid and most impressive books, listen to no frivolous conversation, and touch nothing that could dissipate or enfeeble the mind. How long will the plague be removed before the elasticity will return to the man and the old self reassert its sovereignty ? Not a day need pass. We begin to feel that the worst is past : we say it is darkest before it is dawn, "hope springs eternal in the human breast" ; and so easily do we fall back into the old swing between self-indulgence and nominal homage to God. We think we have felt all the Lord can do, and we say, "His sword is no longer ; it cannot reach us now that we have removed away this little distance from its range ; now and here we may do what we please, and judgment cannot fall upon us." Thus we play old Pharaoh's part day by day. He is a mirror in which we may see ourselves. There is nothing mysterious in this part of the solemn reading. However we may endeavour to escape from the line when it becomes supernatural or romantic, we are brought swiftly and surely back to it when we see these repetitions of obduracy and these renewed challenges of Divine anger and judgment.

How wonderful, too, does self-interest extinguish the sense of justice ! Pharaoh will not let Israel go. He is turning away so much property, he is giving up so many opportunities of enhancing his royal dignity, or his imperial wealth. He will let them go ; then he will not ; he will relax his grasp a little ; then he will tighten it, and make it doubly sure. What is it that

is in the man, thus making him halt, hesitate, and balance himself as between duty and not duty? It is the fiend that still reigns in human thought—its name is Self-interest, or Self-consideration—that will make any man, king or peasant, a thief; in fact, wherever it exists it is of necessity thievish. Self-interest never considers another man's rights. It rises early in the morning to outwit that other man; when he turns round it will encroach upon his rights if it can. It will bend in the attitude of homage and prayer, and all the time be using that posture for the promotion of its own purposes. This illustration need not take us back to ancient Egypt. We know it, we represent it, we attest it by every oath possible to earnestness. We assure ourselves of the evil sovereignty of this principle of self-interest. It is in every one of us; it cannot be got out of us here and now. Whether it must be burned out of us by fire, drained out of us by blood, are questions we may ask: but it will never be argued away. Eloquence will spend its persuasion in vain upon it, and music will lull it to that kind of sleep which will but recruit its strength.

Looking at the Divine side of these plagues we notice the variety of the Divine resources. What we have here are mere examples of what might have been. God has but to look, and the miracle is done. His chariots are twenty thousand. He can touch us at countless points. The same variety is seen to-day. We are afflicted in innumerable ways. Every man has his own peculiar plague. There may be a common likeness amongst the plagues, but every man has his own accent of sorrow, his own particular point where things beat upon him as a blow might beat with cruel repercussion upon a wound. Why throw all these plagues away from us, as teachers and counsellors, because in their little narrowness they are said to have occurred thousands of years ago? They are occurring to-day; they are occurring in our houses, or in the secrecy of our hearts. Many a man is drinking blood when he seems to be drinking water. Many a man has countless plagues of frogs, or lice, or flies, within his soul, stinging him, annoying him, hampering him; keeping him back from the way which he would pursue. Horrible times his soul has by itself,—nights of darkness that may be felt; losses compared with which the loss of the firstborn is but a gain. If

we dwell upon the mere letter, we shall begin to ask questions of curiosity, and wonder how this could be, or that could be; but, looking at the broad solemnity of the case, human life is now attesting the variety of the Divine justice, the infinity of the penalties of God.

We here see how necessary it was for God to reveal the heart to itself. That is one of the mysteries of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Men would never have known that they could have murdered God, if Christ had not been born into the world. Prophets they killed by the score. Angelic men of radiant face and eloquent tongue they had banished without compunction; and last of all, God said "I will send my Son." The treatment of the Son of God revealed the human heart to itself. We do not know what we are unless we look at what is done, not by ourselves only, but by the sum-total of humanity. But who can preach with discrimination severe and just enough on this appalling theme? No man can separate himself from the race and claim to be a little whiter in morality than some other man. That is self-interest again; that is the self-element asserting itself over the generic and total quantity called human nature. When a man committed murder, you committed it. There is a narrow sense in which that is not true, but if you could see yourself in all the possibilities of yourself, you would see that you committed the awful crime. It is necessary that we should shudder at it: it is even necessary that we should punish it; but in doing so we should not forget to ask ourselves the solemn question: were we in the same circumstances, what should we have done? We are not made of different clay, of different sorts of flesh and blood: "God hath made of one blood, all nations of men." That being the case, there is but one heart, one human nature, and in the profoundest conception of this mystery we must look to what has been done by the whole race, if we would know what it is possible to the purest and whitest soul amongst us to do. Be afraid of any criticism that would withdraw you from these broader contemplations, and fix your attention strongly upon little moralities, and cherished virtues, which you set up in protest against being numbered with the totality of mankind.

Here we see the uselessness of punishment. If punishment could have saved the world, Christ need never have come. The

world had been drowned, and yet it came up with a bolder hand to repeat its boldest iniquities. Cities had been burned, yet the sulphur had hardly emitted its last fume before the sinner returned to play the devil again. We speak of the reality of these plagues, the reality of the Divine judgments; we begin to wonder whether such and such things did really happen. What do you mean by *really*? What is reality? It would be impossible for me to believe that the plagues ever took place in Egypt after this fashion and on this scale, if I had not a witness in my own heart and life that it was quite possible for them so to be manifested and realised. What a man sees in delirium tremens *is* real. It is the only reality. The sober, cool mind could never see these things; it is only the mind in a given condition of wreck and debasement that can grasp these awful realities. When the suffering man sees the curtain removed and grim death looking at him, it *is* real. Tell him that it is some phantom of the brain; reason with him about it, and he tells you he saw it, and your reasoning is like sprinkling water upon Etna or Vesuvius, when the mountain is ablaze. When the delirious brain sees the whole bed become a nest of intertwined serpents with gleaming eyes and darting fangs and approaching cruelty, it *is* real. Nothing ever can upon earth be so real. After that, facts become dramatic incidents, and things that can be touched, seen with the bodily eyes, are but theatrical common-places. We see with the inner eyes; we see with the soul's vision. In some moments God connects us with the eternities, and if we shrink back from them, he is the false teacher who tells us that our experiences are not real. The man who speaks so is a narrow teacher; he is limited within arbitrary lines; he does not touch the agony and the Divinity of things.

So, allowing all that may be called romantic, supernatural, to fall off from this story of the plagues, there remains all that God wanted to remain—three things:—first, the assertion of the Divine right in life. God cannot be turned out of his own creation: he must assert his claim, and urge it, and redeem it. The second thing that remains is the incontestable fact of human opposition to Divine voices. Divine voices call to right, to purity, to nobleness, to love, to brotherhood; and every day we resist these voices, and assert rebellious claims. The third thing

that remains is the inevitable issue. We cannot fight God and win. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Why smite with feeble fist the infinite granite of the infinite strength? who will lose? The certain result will be the overthrow of the sinner: the drowning of every Pharaoh who hardens himself against the Divine will and voice. Stripped, therefore, of everything of the nature of romance—if you will import that word into criticism so solemn—there remains the threefold fact that God has rights amongst us; that man resists those rights; that the battle comes, and the battle ends in but one way—"The Lord reigneth."

Now that I come to think of it, have not all these plagues followed my own obstinacy and hardness of heart in relation to things Divine? We speak of the plagues of Egypt as though they began and ended in that distant land, and we regard them now as part of an exciting historical romance. I will think otherwise of them. The local incident and the local colour may be dispensed with, but the supreme fact in my own consciousness is that God always follows my obstinacy with plagues. The plagues he can indeed vary, because his understanding is infinite and his resources are without bound. What is the meaning of the sleeplessness which has turned night into a longer day? What is the true interpretation of the diseases which have enfeebled my bodily strength? What is the meaning of the graves which I have dug one after another for the burial of wife, and child, and friend? What is the interpretation of every loss which has befallen my possessions? It is easy to call all these things by ordinary names and reckon them as part of the common lot of man, and so miss all their meaning and all their sacred pith. It is better for my soul's health that I should regard all these circumstances as having a distinct religious application. I need not amaze my judgment or bewilder my conscience by inventing new romantic names or starting new casuistical difficulties. It will sober and elevate me to regard all the visitations which have caused my life its keenest pains as ministries originated and directed by Heaven's beneficent wisdom. By consideration of the case in suitable temper I am able to drive away the plague which has been a burden to my life. Even now I may

pray unto the Lord, and seek deliverance from the dangers which threaten my life on every hand. Dangers are rightly used when they move us to bolder prayer; losses are turned into gains when they lift our lives in an upward direction; disease is the beginning of health when it leads the sufferer to the Father's house. Pharaoh had his plagues, many and awful; and every life has its penal or chastening visitations which for the present are full of agony and bitterness, but which may be so used as to become the beginning of new liberties and brighter joys.

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### NOTE.

"We remained two months at Khartoum. During this time we were subjected to intense heat and constant dust-storms, attended with a general plague of boils. Verily, the plagues of Egypt remain to this day in the Soudan. On the 26th June (1865) we had the most extraordinary dust-storm that had ever been seen by the inhabitants. I was sitting in the courtyard of my agent's house at about half-past four p.m.; there was no wind, and the sun was as bright as usual in this cloudless sky, when suddenly a gloom was cast over all,—a dull yellow glare pervaded the atmosphere. Knowing that this effect portended a dust-storm, and that the present calm would be followed by a hurricane of wind, I rose to go home, intending to secure the shutters. Hardly had I risen when I saw approaching, from the south-west apparently, a solid range of immense brown mountains, high in air. So rapid was the passage of this extraordinary phenomenon, that in a few minutes we were in actual pitchy darkness. At first there was no wind, and the peculiar calm gave an oppressive character to the event. We were in a 'darkness that might be felt. Suddenly the wind arrived, but not with the violence that I had expected. There were two persons with me,—Michael Latfalla, my agent, and Monsieur Lombrosio. So intense was the darkness, that we tried to distinguish our hands placed close before our eyes; not even an outline could be seen. This lasted for upwards of twenty minutes: it then rapidly passed away, and the sun shone as before; but we had *felt* the darkness that Moses had inflicted upon the Egyptians."—SIR S. BAKER.

## Exodus xii. 1-20.

The section from verse 1 to 28 is independent of the previous narrative, and is probably part of the law rather than of the history. It was not delivered at once, but is in all likelihood a gathering up of instructions given at different times. Up to verse 20 the section might form part of the book of Leviticus. Let us read the chapter thus:—

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

2. This month (the Hebrews had formerly begun the year at or near the autumnal equinox. The Egyptians began the year in June; the Babylonians at the vernal equinox) shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

3. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month (thus allowing ample time for the examination of the animal) they shall take to them every man a lamb (all Israelites are supposed to possess a lamb, or to be able to purchase one), according to the house of their fathers (rather, for the house of their fathers), a lamb for an house;

4. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb (ten was the least number regarded as sufficient; twenty not considered too many).

5. Your lamb shall be without blemish (the teaching of natural piety); a male of the first year (that is, not above a year old); ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

6. And ye shall keep it up (separate it from the flock and have it in special custody for four days) until the fourteenth day of the same month (the day of the full moon); and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it (with a bunch of hyssop, a plant supposed to have purifying properties) on the two side posts and on the upper door post (the latticed window above the door) of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs (signifying the putting away of all defilement and corruption) they shall eat it.

9. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance (inside) thereof.

10. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning (thus avoiding both profanation and superstition); and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11. And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand ; and ye shall eat it in haste : it is the Lord's passover (the word is here used for the first time).

12. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment : I am the Lord (*Jehovah*).

13. And the blood shall be to you for a token (a token to me on your behalf) upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

14. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations ; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever (the Passover is continued in the Eucharist).

15. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread ; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses (leaven was typical of corruption).: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

16. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation (a general gathering of the people to the door of the sanctuary for sacrifice, worship, and perhaps instruction), and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you ; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

17. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread ; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt : therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

18. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even (the even on which the fourteenth day closed), ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

19. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses : for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger (a foreigner in blood), or born in the land (of Canaan).

20. Ye shall eat nothing leavened ; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

## THE PRESERVATION OF THE ISRAELITES.

**D**URING the plague of hail,—when the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast, when the fire ran along upon the ground and the hail was so grievous that there had been none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation,—“Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail”—“The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” After the plague of hail came the plague of darkness. It was ■ darkness that might be felt. “There was a thick darkness in all

the land of Egypt three days," during which period the people "saw not one another, neither rose any from his place." In the midst of this darkness "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings"—"The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." After the plague of darkness came a still more terrible midnight, the midnight in which the firstborn of Egypt were destroyed. But in view of that infinite darkness the Lord changed the beginning of the year. He changes the beginnings of time now. He will not have your history reckoned from your fleshly birthday, but from the day when you were born again. On the tenth day of the new year every man in Israel took a lamb, "a lamb for an house,"—a lamb without blemish, either a sheep or a goat. So a touch of grace is in this technical regulation. On the fourteenth day—four days having elapsed, during which the lamb would be examined to see if there were spot or blemish in his flesh—the lamb was killed in the evening, and each family took of the blood and struck it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherein the lamb was eaten. The sign was blood: the blood was a token upon the houses,—“and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” So in hail there was dryness; in darkness there was light; in destruction there was preservation—"The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." To explain the detail is not in human power, but to me the detail is a small mystery compared with the greater problem that these trifling acts of mitigation still left the people themselves in the cruel bondage of Egypt. They were dry in the midst of the hail, but they were not the less in bondage; they had lights in their houses, but their houses themselves were prisons; they were not killed in sudden judgment—the very suddenness of which is mercy;—but they died the slow and sevenfold death of studied cruelty. If I had read all this in an ancient book written by an author unknown, I should have been staggered by its romance, and strongly disposed towards unbelief. But it is not written in an ancient book; it is not a romance by an anonymous author; it is not a weird poem written by a poet who plucked his feather from the pinion of a flying eagle and madly dipped it in some sea of sulphur. It is a

picture of our own life; it is stiff prose, hard as facts, true to the lines which give definiteness to every day. We may give up every one of the descriptive words and leave in its splendid integrity the internal doctrine. The fear is that the critic should never get beyond the door of the words, simply because he is a critic only within a narrow compass. The great and solemn question to be put by every reader is this:—What is the purpose of the description? What is the moral truth which the description is intended to picture and convey? Having seized the spiritual teaching, all that is external and decorative may be traced to national habits of expression—perhaps to Oriental exaggeration. Our business does not end with the language, but with the inner truth which that language was intended vividly to represent. In the light of this canon of interpretation let me repeat that this whole incident, turning upon the differences which it represents between men, is part of our own history, and the whole drama is passing before our own eyes,—yes, through the very centre of our own houses and dwelling-places. See it this be not so.

Is it an experience quite unknown that the most terrific and overwhelming flood should be kept back from some part of our life and hope? Is it a universal deluge? The flood was very tempestuous; it seemed to break upon the poor life from every point; but now that we have had time to look at the whole case, what is the reality? Was nothing left untouched? Was there not some little ark sailing quietly on the great water? Is there any man who can say, "The flood utterly destroyed me; nothing was left,—no token of mercy, no sign of the Divine providence, no expression of heavenly care; the ruin was total, absolute, overwhelming and irreparable"? Can we not say,—“The ruin was very great, but, thank God, the sweet child was left: in Goshen’s land we had that gracious comfort”? Or can we not say,—“Amidst it all our health was wonderfully preserved”? or “Reason never staggered”? or “In the midst of all there was a strange peace, deeper than any measured sea in the very centre of the heart”? Can we not say,—“In the midst of all there was a sanctuary, there was a stairway leading straight up into the heavens”? Once discover that fact, and see how natural it is to express it in poetic form. Cold prose is not fit for this holy

service. We will speak of it rapturously, poetically: with exaggeration to the man who does not understand the experience. We will say that a chamber was found for us in the steeps of the mountain whilst the valleys were engulfed by the roaring flood. We will say that in the sunlit cloud of heaven we rested whilst the thunder-rains flashed and foamed far under our uplifted feet; and in our rapture we may feel as if heaven itself had warmly curtained us whilst the earth was drowned in seas of rain. The imagery is not the point; the mere verbal expression has next to nothing to do with the reality of the case,—except that it must ever be an effort to express the inexpressible. Our boldest metaphors, our fiercest eloquence must be but a dim symbol indicative of the infinite, the unutterable, the profound and eternal. The temptation is to wrestle with the words, to raise a controversy where no battle is needed, and where battle indeed is wholly out of place. The one inquiry which should urge itself upon the mind is:—What is the reality? What is it that occasions the poetry? Why this use of brilliant colour?—and we shall find in reply to that inquiry that the reason is that God, though terrible in judgment, has yet given us dryness in the midst of the storm, a quiet resting-place amid the tumult of the seas; a hiding chamber, a sanctuary stronger than rock, amidst all the transient and mutable—all that could be upset and filled with the spirit of ruin.

Then again is it an experience quite unknown that, amidst darkest darkness, there has yet remained to Christian hearts some ray of tender light—a lustrous edging of a cloud vast as the span of heaven? The experience is familiar; we can all testify to it,—that in the very blackest night we have at least supposed we could see some star battling its way to us as if bearing messages of hope. Who has been stripped utterly? What Job is there who has been so impoverished as to have taken away from his soul the desire to pray? That being left, all is left,—a clear, dry way up to the throne, and nothing is lost. In the consciousness that full and bold access can be had to the Father poverty is wealth; loss is gain; weakness is immortal strength. Never have I met a man that has not had upon him some little token that God had not absolutely forsaken him:—some of his old friends were living: his memory was unusually quick in bringing up incidents

of the gone time which warmed him like prophecies : stress and agony had forced to his lips some new and surprising eloquence of prayer. In some cases the sufferer has said,—“I would not have been without that affliction, now that I see the whole case ; before I was afflicted I went astray ; I have seen in darkness what I never could see in the common daylight ; I bless God for the night, for if the sun had always glared upon me I had not known that ‘the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.’” Once let the mind seize that fact, and instantly there will be a light in the habitations above the brightness of the sun,—a glory humbling the pomp of summer, a splendour which angels might wish to see,—a miracle wrought in light. Then the heart will invent words. The heart is not to be silenced by the taunt of exaggeration. The mean man who never felt the throb of a noble passion shall not be invested with power to put down the rapture of souls that are aflame with thankfulness. There is a danger in this, however. There are some men who never warm. They are not children of the sun,—no music can thrill them, no colour can bring tears to their eyes,—a sunset is upon them a wasted miracle. The boldness of the Bible is seen in that it is never afraid to put the case in exactly opposite light and with exactly opposite bearing. Sometimes all the advantage is upon the side of the ungodly. The Psalmist was not afraid to say respecting those who made themselves their own gods,—“They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain ; violence covereth them as a garment.”

So the Bible does not shrink from changing the ground entirely and representing the exactly reverse picture of that which is presented in the Book of Exodus in relation to the children of Israel. How is this?—because the Book is true,—true at the core, true in its purpose and meaning,—bearing upon it all the colours of all the ages through which it has passed ; but the root is the same, drawing its nutriment and its force from the very heart of the Divine power.

As to the sprinkled blood, have we no feeling of its relation and sublimity ? Do we part company with the historian here, saying we have no corresponding experience ? We do touch the

historic spirit in the matter of protection from the overwhelming flood, and of having some gleam of light in the midst of surrounding darkness ; but when the lamb is provided a language is spoken which has no interpretation to our souls,—here we fall out of the music, having no answering harmony in our own experience.

Was not a Lamb slain for us also ? Here silence is better than speech. We worship him who by his own blood entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. We are redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter ; he hath redeemed us to God by his own blood. Why here we seem to have still larger confirmatory experience. This is our hope in the day of judgment. Not that we have been moral, clever, free from public charge ; but that the sprinkled blood is upon the poorest of our forfeited lives. When the angels shall come to execute the Divine judgment what is our hope ? That we were not so immoral as some other man ? If that is all, there is no blood in the mean, frivolous speech. That we have kept ourselves from the cognisance of the magistrate and the penalty of the national law ? By such protestations and felicitations we may but aggravate the guilt which is at once our burden and our curse. What then is our hope ? The Lamb—the Lamb slain—the Lamb of the precious blood. Can we explain it ? Thank God, no. We cannot explain the sin,—how then can we explain the remedy ? We feel it, and we know it by feeling. The highest knowledge comes to us not along the narrow way of the intellect, but through the broad thoroughfares of the responsive and sympathetic heart. We keep ourselves outside the sanctuary because we will only have the intellect satisfied with all its vain questionings, and curious analyses and propositions, whereas it is the heart that must enter. The intellect as a clever, boastful, self-idolatrous faculty must be left outside, and only the heart come within the sanctuary of the Divine forgiveness and the Divine complacency,—the broken heart, the contrite heart, the heart that has no speech in self-defence, but that yields itself into the hands of the loving Saviour to be treated by his grace, not daring to encounter his judgment.

We are not ashamed of this word *blood*. We are not to be driven away from it because some minds have debased the term, having taken out of it all its highest symbolism and noblest suggestion. We speak not of blood merely as it is commonly understood, but of blood as the life, the love, the heart,—the whole quality of Deity—a mystery in words having no answer in speech. Is the blood upon the house of my life? Is the blood upon the doorpost of my dwelling-place? Have I put up against the Divine judgment some hand of self-protection? Verily, it will be swallowed up in the great visitation. In that time nothing will stand but the blood which God himself has chosen as a token and a memorial. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin.” There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. Do not attempt to bar iron window, to close iron door, to protect yourself against the judgments of God. All we can do will be overwhelmed in the Divine visitation. We must allow God to find his own answer to his own judgments.

“My faith looks up to thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary!  
Saviour Divine!”

That is the attitude which God will respect. A looking in any other direction will be regarded as an aggravation of our offence; but a hopeful, tender, trustful looking towards the Cross will keep back the thunder, and God will spare us when he makes inquisition for blood.

### Exodus xiii. 13.

"And every fistling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb ; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck."

#### THE REDEMPTION OF THE ASS.

ACCORDING to the ritual the ass was reckoned among the unclean animals. On that account, if it was to be continued in service it must be redeemed—that is to say, its uncleanness must be recognised, and recognised through the usual medium, namely, of sacrifice. Israel had no horses. Unless we keep this fact in mind, many a passage in the Old Testament will be wholly unintelligible. Horses were for the rich, the mighty, and the proud ; horses were symbols of strength, independence, majesty. Remembering this, we shall see the meaning of a line in the song of triumph : "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." That has but little meaning to us. We are accustomed to the sight of horses, and to the use of them ; but Israel had been in long servitude—Israel might use the ass, but in the land from which Israel had come only the proud Egyptian could enjoy the advantage of a horse. "Some trust in horses, some in chariots, but our trust," said they who had no horses, "is in the God of heaven." The ass was hated in many ancient lands. It was given over to contempt. One nation of antiquity hesitated, in organising an instrumental band, whether to allow the admission of the trumpet, because the sound of the trumpet reminded the people of the bray of the hated ass. Without these historical circumstances in remembrance we cannot understand the Scriptures ; we shall wonder because of our ignorance, and be surprised at exclusions and inclusions which knowledge would amply and satisfactorily explain.\*

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\* Speaking of the Scriptural history of the ass, Dean Stanley has given the following summary in his "History of the Jewish Church" : "With he-asses and she-asses Abraham returned from Egypt ; with the ass Abraham went up

The subject thus comes near to us with pressing spiritual meaning. God has made provision for the redemption of the vilest, "Rejoice greatly, oh daughter of Zion; shout, oh daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The abhorred may be set amongst the beloved; that which is farthest away may be brought nearest to the centre; the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and let no man glory in his strength or in his wisdom: let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. The Lord will classify his creatures; we make some initial distributions, but the classification is a heavenly act, and we shall in the long run, after innumerable

with Isaac to the sacrifice; on asses Joseph's brethren came thither; on an ass Moses sat his wife and his sons on his return from Arabia to Egypt; an old man seated on an ass was the likeness of him, which, according to Gentile traditions, his countrymen delighted to honour. On white asses, or mules, through the whole period of the early history till their first contact with foreign nations in the reign of Solomon, their princes rode in state; the prophecy fulfilled in the close of their history was that their King should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. It was the long-continued mark of their ancient pastoral simple condition. The rival horse came into Palestine slowly and unlawfully, and was always spoken of as the sign of the pride and power of Egypt; in the funeral procession of Jacob the chariots and horses of Egypt are specially contrasted with the asses of the sons of Israel; they who in later times put their trust in Egypt founded that trust in her chariots and horses. But we know not only the Israelite, but Egyptian feeling also. Whilst on the Theban monuments the war-horse is always at hand, the ass, in their minds, was regarded as the exclusive, the contemned, symbol of the nomadic race who had left them. On asses they were described as flying from Egypt; asses, it was believed, had guided them through the desert; in the Holy of Holies (to such a pitch of exaggeration was the story carried), the mysterious object of Jewish worship was held to be an ass's head; and so generally was this persuasion communicated to the heathen world, that when a new Jewish sect, as it was thought, arose under the name of Christian, the favourite theme of reproach and of caricature was that they worshipped in like manner an ass, the son of an ass even on the Cross itself. So long and far were the effects visible of this primitive diversity between the civilised kingdom of the Pharaohs and the pastoral tribe of the land of Goshen; so innocent was the occasion of this long-standing calumny—a calumny not of generations' or of centuries', but of millenniums' growth, before it was dispelled; perhaps the most curious of all the many like slanders and fables invented in the course of ecclesiastical history by the bitterness of national or theological hatred."—"The Jewish Church," vol. i., pp. 81-83.

experiments, find ourselves shaping things after the pattern which was shown to man in the mount. What becomes of the favourite argument that all things are the good creatures of God in view of the distributions which God himself has made? He has said to man again and again: Thou shalt not eat this animal. Why not? Are not all animals the good gifts of God? By this shallow plea we excuse the indulgence of our passions and seek to sanctify the profanation of our appetite. Who made the living things? They were made by the God who fashioned all life; yet he has surrounded some with sanctitudes that may not be violated. He has given others to be food for the hunger of men. Within the law there is another law, and above it there is a higher law still, and no cheap rendering or shallow interpretation of apparent facts can be admitted for a moment near the altar which sanctifies the universe. It requires a long time to teach some men that the very lowest may be turned into the highest, and the uncleanest may be set amongst those who are clothed in the purity of snow. Said one such man: "God hath showed me"—his eyes were even then glazed with semi-unbelief—"that I should not call any man common or unclean." It takes God to show that revelation to us. It has become a commonplace because all things have become commonplaces, but in its inner meaning it is a revelation charged with the very glory of the Shekinah.

God having thus laid down the method of redemption—the scheme by which inequalities can be levelled up and uses made of things temporarily forbidden—proceeds to show that behind this mercy there burns a law. "And if thou wilt not"—what then? We are not left to mere disobedience. God has not so constituted things that we can obey or disobey, and no consequence will follow. All things beat upon one another in sacred and vital pulsation. It is not given to any of us to obey without recompense, or to disobey without loss. The law is: "If thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck." The unredeemed ass shall not live. Looked at within narrow boundaries, the circumstance seems to be trivial, but to the eye of wisdom—the gaze that has in it the look of other worlds—there is a symbolic interpretation which is verifying itself every day in our experience. God cannot be out-witted. We have gone into his

presence with half a gift, saying it was all. We have called the fraction an integer. What has been the consequence?—death. We may be dead whilst we live. We have mistaken the limit of the individual. We have thought that in the body is the death, and because the bones were still in joint and the locomotion was not interrupted we have supposed that we lived. The man within fell down dead when we told the lie—the real man, the Divinely-imaged man, the man meant for immortality in heaven. “Within,” said Jesus Christ to some, “ye are rottenness.” By skill, by wealth, by study, we have been enabled to clothe ourselves with purple and fine linen; but the purple smells rank; through the fine linen there comes an odour which tells of internal death. So foolish are we and ignorant that we suppose that concealment amounts to a complete reversal of the law inexorable. We cannot defeat God. We are cunning tricksters; we have a wonderful faculty of altering figures and forging names and putting in false returns and schedules and bribing auditors whom we hire out of our own family, and who wish us to be auditors in return, that we may conspire in a common felony. But God cannot be defeated. His word is looking at us all the time and throttling us; that is the literal rendering of the passage. All things are naked and *throttled* by the word with which we have to do—the eyes burning us, the hands grasping us; and because we have thrown dust into our own vision, and do not see the reality of things, we call the Biblical appeal an ancient cry and the modern preaching an obsolete claim. Oh that men were wise, that they understood these things! We have temporarily deceived God. We have many an ass in our fields that we have not redeemed; we have reserved the price of the lamb; we have kept back and have not restored unto God that which is right, and we say: Behold, he knows it not. We mourn over our losses and difficulties in the house, and in the field, and in the market-place: we say, “There is an epidemic in the stable, there is a blight in the pasture, there is a cold in the air, before which warm life cannot stand.” It is all true—it all comes out of the unredeemed property. Is there not a cause? There is always a moral explanation. They are shallow philanthropists who seek to stop the judgment of God by cheap break-fasts for the poor. God will not have his broken laws tinkered

and soldered in that fashion. Judgment must begin at the house of God, and we must deal with the realities of the case. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

What a comprehensive aspect of redemption is presented by this incident! Who can tell where redemption ends? Who dare say that the dogs die and are never heard of or known any more? Who has entitled us to assert that every living thing will not live again, and live for ever? We do not know what life is. We may take it lawfully and consume it, but we have not therefore destroyed it. Why did God make all these little winged things that flutter in the sunbeam—all these busy tiny creatures that toil night and day in the fecundant earth? Why did he fill the water with life and the forests with the throb and tread of mighty beasts? It cannot be merely to please himself, as a child might invent new toys to please a momentary fancy. Life is a greater mystery than any explanation has yet wholly covered. The only word that begins to touch it is the word *Redemption*. We cannot tell how large redemption is, but we may judge somewhat of its amplitude by another word akin to it and preparatory to it, and that is the word *Providence*. God thus enables us to judge in some degree one thing by another, one scheme by another. Redemption would have overwhelmed us; we should have called it a supernatural word, or a term lying a long way from the common reach of our thinking and experience. So we begin with the word *Providence*—that under-word, that younger term that does the housework of the universe; busy, kindly, thoughtful, hospitable word, that makes things ready for us, cares for all our life, busies itself about us, and that says to us, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." A student of Providence cannot, therefore, be so much surprised at the vastness of redemption as he who has not made that study. The providence has been so minute that we cannot wonder the redemption should exceed it in its critical care for the weal of life.

The giving of such a law is specially interesting as suggesting certain inferences as to the Law-giver. This is an apparently trivial enactment. There is nothing trivial in the dispensations of God. He who makes trifles anywhere will make a trifle of himself, of his business, and of his destiny. Little things are made

important in the Scriptures ; little things are made important by all wise men in the relations of life. This is also an apparently out-of-the-way incident. Out of the way ! What way ? Out of our way, possibly ; but what is our way ?—a little path leading nowhere : a road we have made with which to please ourselves to go up and down upon, and suppose to be the universe. The way ! Who knoweth the way of the Lord ? His way is in the great waters ; he walketh upon the winds, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Out of the way ! Even the universe is too narrow a path for his progress. Even the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him. There is nothing out of the way to God. Show me some life that God never fashioned, or that never came within his purpose when he started the mystery of the kingdom of life, and that may be out of the way.

Then comes the cumulative argument, which Jesus Christ himself often employed. "If a beast—much more a man." Speaking of the flowers of the field and the fowls of the air, Jesus Christ said, "Are ye not much better than they ?" And again he asks, "How much better is a man than a sheep ?" He said, "If ye, being evil," give certain good things, "how much more will your heavenly Father," who is perfect, do things gracious and beneficent ? May the ass be redeemed, and the unclean beast brought into a right status before God—and has no arrangement been made for the redemption of man ?

Under what a system we live ! We think the old laws and statutes have been abolished. Not one of them. We suppose the book of Exodus to be full of ancient precepts. If so, I have not found any of the precepts. They must be wise enough to take me into their school who can show me one obsolete line in all the Bible that relates to the education and the discipline, the training and the completion of human life. The words may have been changed, but every statute is still here. We are still in a network, and live in a cage of service. If we have come into a larger liberty, it is only because we have come into a larger cage. Is God less watchful of human life than of the lives of beasts ? Even if many of the little narrow laws have been done away, it is only in the sense of their having been displaced by the greater

law. The invitation issuing from all these considerations is an invitation of love—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." How is the yoke easy? Because the increased strength has been so cultured and enlarged as not to feel the chafing which was once intolerable. How is the burden light? Because the back is stronger to bear it. The burden of law remains eternally the same, but the inspiration of grace, the nutriment and the comfort of internal edification, enables men to carry the burden as if it were a feather, and to run all the days of life with an untiring energy. God shows his grandeur by his love—

"God, in the person of his Son,  
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

They reason narrowly and superficially who suppose that there is no law under love—its guarantee and its glory. God has not changed. Love is the blossom of law; love is the liberty of law. The whole law is fulfilled in love. The law seems to say in every page of human history: Do not stop me here; I am moving on to a culmination; let us meet in the orchard in blossom time, in the field in earing time, and then we shall know the meaning of all this supposedly hard, stern, sterile law which has been training the human family to the higher realisations and exemplifications of tenderest, Divinest love. "I will rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

All the way along where I have been permitted to accompany him he has never forgotten one thing, even according to the history imperfectly written, because written by human hands. I cannot charge God with one deed of negligence. He would need to be of a dull mind with hardly any vision at all who would shrink from undertaking to prove that all human history, as related in the Scriptures, proves the watchfulness, the tenderness, and the love of our Father in heaven. But he is not to be trifled with. Do not suppose we can come and go as we like; now in a high mood, now in a low one; now obey, now disobey; now be up among the angels, then among the exiles and rebels. God is watchful on every side; he keeps a register. In the twenty-

fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew he startled men by saying what he knew about them. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love. Can any man stand up and say that he redeemed the ass, and yet God broke his neck?—he fulfilled the law, yet God inflicted the penalty?—he was good, and God was unkind? No such man rises to the challenge of the universe.

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### NOTE.

The law of Moses declared the firstborn, if a boy, to be sacred to God, and required him to be redeemed from the priest. The modern Jews maintain, "if the firstborn of an Israelite be a son, the father is bound to redeem him, from the thirtieth day forward. If he redeem him before that time, it is not accounted a redemption. If he omit it after that, he is guilty of neglecting an affirmative precept. On the thirty-first day the father sends for a priest and places his little son on a table, saying, 'My wife, who is an Israelitess, has brought me a firstborn, but the law assigns him to thee.' The priest asks, 'Dost thou therefore surrender him to me?' The father answers in the affirmative. The priest then inquires which he would rather have, his firstborn, or the five shekels required for his redemption. The father replies, he prefers his son, and charging the priest to accept the money, pronounces a form of benediction. The father then produces the value of five shekels, and the priest asks the mother if she had been delivered of any other child, or miscarried. If she answers no, the priest takes the money, lays it on the head of the child, and says, 'This son being a firstborn, the blessed God hath commanded us to redeem him, as it is said, "And those that are to be redeemed from a month old thou shalt redeem them, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs" (Num. xviii. 16). Whilst thou wast in thy mother's womb thou wast in the power of thy Father who is in heaven, and in the power of thy parents; but now thou art in my power, for I am a priest. But thy father and mother are desirous to redeem thee, for thou art a sanctified firstborn, as it is written, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine"' (Exod. xiii. 2). He then turns to the father, and says, 'I have received these five shekels from thee, for the redemption of this thy son; and, behold, he is therewith redeemed, according to the law of Moses and Israel.'" This ceremony is followed by feasting. When the father dies before the thirty-first day, the mother is not bound to redeem her son, but a piece of parchment or small plate of silver is suspended on the child's neck, with a Hebrew inscription, signifying a *firstborn son not redeemed*, or a *son of a priest*.—*Biblical Antiquities.*

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who is sufficient to obey the call which thou hast addressed to the human soul? We wonder at thy patience. When we grow in wisdom we grow in anger, for ignorance then becomes so hateful to us. What must our ignorance be to the all-wisdom of God? Blessed be thy name; it is all-wisdom, and therefore the more patient. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. We have fallen below the miracle; yea, we have said there are no miracles now; and therein we have spoken the lying truth. We look at the letter, but see nothing of its flush and colour of fire; there is no God in it, either of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or our own forefathers in the flesh. It is now become a letter amongst many, and might be numbered, and volumed, and forgotten. It is not the bush that burns with fire, that fastens the wondering shepherd to the road, or makes him turn aside, not from duty, but towards worship. We think we have read thy book. We are only content with it as we can move about in it here and there. How canst thou live with fools? How canst thou spare the Church that has no blood-mark upon it—a great hypocrisy? Sometimes thou dost show us thy patience most vividly, and that is when we ourselves see that we are undeserving. Blessed be thy name; thy patience is longer than our obstinacy, and the goodness of the Lord will yet conquer us, and thou shalt, long ages after this, which arithmetic cannot number, have some around thee who can look upon God and not die. Thy way is wonderful; the sea is shallow compared with the depths of thy wisdom, and the firmament a low height which a child can touch, compared with the infinite ascension and majesty of thy thought. God be merciful unto us. We were born yesterday, and in our pride and folly we think we are living to-day, not knowing that we are only beginning to be. Spare us! Pity us! Take to thyself the greater glory in our preservation, and not the readier glory of our destruction; take thy glory by-and-by in the patience which has ripened into success, and not in the destruction which has burned like an angry judgment against creatures of a day. We bless thee for thy Word—great mighty Word, more terrible than fire, sharper than a sword, softer than dew, more beautiful than all colour, with a whisper in it that never can be imitated; a still small voice: now of reason, now of expostulation, now of encouragement, but hiding in itself all the waves, and thunders, and winds that went before it—the very suppression of almightiness. All things are naked and prostrate to the eyes of that Word with which we have to do. It lays a grip upon us like the grip of a wrestler, and throws us to the ground, and binds us there in servitude that cannot be resisted. Blessed be God

for his Word ; it is a lamp, a light, a trumpet, a music, a song, a friend ; it is everything that can cheer, satisfy, and delight, and content the soul without one touch of satiety ; and all this we know in Christ thy Son, Blessed One, Second in the Trinity, yet God over all ; Alpha, Omega, shining in the star of morning, gleaming in the star of eventide, burning in the noonday sun, filling all things with the glory of his presence. May he fill our hearts with his Cross, with the spirit of sacrifice, with an agony like his own ; without him we could not bear it, but with him we can turn sorrow into joy, and a crown of thorns into a crown of blessedness. Pity us whenever we have to carry great weights with unequal strength. Make our bed for us when we cannot make it for ourselves. Touch the bread when it is coming down to the last cut of the loaf, and behold we shall have more at the end than we had to begin with. As for our enemies, we cannot see them because thou art so near ; thou wilt deal with them. Destroy them not, we pray thee, but turn them into friends. The Lord comfort the sick. Speak to hearts that have been impoverished and desolated lately, in which a great grave has been dug, and the lovedest of all lives has been taken. God help us, sustain us. The days are but a handful when they are all reckoned, but they are linked on to God's eternity. Amen.

### Exodus xiii.

#### THE DROWNING OF PHARAOH.

"**W**HAT, still talking about miracles ? We thought that faith in miracles had been given up long ago by intelligent men." Some such expression as this would not be unnatural from certain quarters. The answer is that "intelligent men" are just beginning to believe in miracles. They are nearly always the last men to come round to great conceptions and noble spiritual realisations. But even "intelligent men" are stirring themselves with somewhat of reluctance in the direction which we should term spiritual and evangelical. All the greatest books that are being written to-day, upon what would once have been called the hostile side, force upon their readers the consciousness of a hunger which nothing in time or space can satisfy—a voracity of the soul. We may be more or less sated after having read arguments upon which we have been nourished for a life-time, but we are pinched with gnawing and agonising hunger after perusing the pages which were intended to tell us all that can be told. Did the miracles as here reported actually occur ? Why not ? You can only be puzzled by a miracle when you are puzzled by a God. If your conception of God were like mine,

no miracle that ever was reported could touch the region of impossibility. No wonder men are troubled, even to perplexity and sore distress of heart, by so-called miracles, when they have not acquainted themselves deeply with the power and spirit and purpose of God. The study is begun at the wrong point. To me it is easier to believe that the miracles occurred than that they could not have occurred. The difficulty from my point of view is wholly on the other side. Whether they did historically occur or not is not the immediate question. To me, I repeat, it is easier, with my conception of God, to believe that the miracles could have occurred than that it was impossible for them to occur. Everything turns upon our conception of the Worker of the miracles. We do not begin at the miracle itself. We begin with the Teacher, the Worker, the realised Jehovah, or the incarnate Logos. Having first entered into fellowship, we next pass into faith. Knowing by the penetration and sympathy of love what the spirit of the Worker is, we have no difficulty. We pass with him into all his action, and when the action is mightiest our rest is deepest, because the proportion between the Worker and the work impresses the mind with a sense of infinite harmony. The greater the miracle the easier to believe in it. The greatest miracle must be infinitely less than the Worker who accomplished it. If ever faith falters it must be because the miracle is too small. The great miracle challenges our best self like the trumpet of resurrection; as the miracle increases in volume and grandeur, in pomp and nobleness, something within us hitherto unknown rises and claims kinship with the Worker of that stupendous wonder. This was curiously illustrated in the life of Jesus Christ. When the people fell into unbelief it was because the miracle was of what may be termed a commonplace character,—that is to say, some possible explanation of jugglery might in some degree account for it. To open the eyes of the blind might be some trick of magic; but the man himself stood up and said,—“Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.” He seized the true emphasis and meaning of the action. To open the eyes of the blind might be accounted for by some species of cleverness or legerdemain; but, says the man: “I was *born* blind; I believe this miracle, not because it is little but because it is great.” Thus man

is made to know subtly and profoundly that he was created in the image and likeness of God, and when God is, so to say, most God, man realises his human grandeur as he can realise it under no other circumstances. To heal the bruised or broken joint might be some successful trick in occult surgery ; there might be pretence about it. We allow a miracle of that kind to pass under our review without being deeply moved by it,—it comes not up to the level of our truest grandeur ; but when a dead man is raised—one who has been four days in the grave—when he comes forth, a new feeling seizes the mind, and because the miracle enlarges and ennobles itself, we rise with corresponding and harmonious dignity of conception and sympathy. It is only, therefore, where the miracle is supposedly little or imitable, or commonplace, that faith hardly cares to stoop to take up a trifle so insignificant. The soul of man being really roused, and burning through and through with a celestial fire, asks for infinite miracles,—asks for God. Grow in grace, and you will take up all the minor miracles as very little things, and yearn in sweet and ardent prayer for the greatest of all miracles—the conscious presence of the Living God.

But there is another mode of treatment which we have not in these pastoral studies hesitated to adopt, which will enable us to seize the supernatural element with a firmer hand.

Let us in the first instance always inquire into the moral doctrine of these unusual events : asking what is the underlying truth, what the spiritual and moral meaning the narration of the exciting incidents is intended to convey to us. Having discovered the intent of the writer we shall have no difficulty about the romantic or amazing incidents. This is what we do with a parable, and a parable is a miracle in imagination. The great miracle has about it the touch and the mystery of the marvellous. It is not an off-hand thought. It is reason at its best ; or, to speak figuratively, it is reason on wings,—no longer walking on the narrow earth but flying in the unmeasured heaven. We do not force a parable into literal meanings at every point ; we ask, What is its central intent or meaning ? and having seized that we treat all the outward and literal as decorative, suggestive, or merely incidentally helpful ; but we do not risk the truth because of the peculiarity of the medium of its conveyance.

"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

"He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (xiii. 21, 22).

What is the great doctrine of that expression?

This:—The consciousness of the Divine presence is in proportion to the circumstances in which we are placed. In other words, our circumstances determine our consciousness of the Divine nearness. Sometimes life is all day—almost a summer day with great spans of blue sky overhead, and where the clouds gather they gather in beautiful whiteness, as of purity akin to the holiness of the inner and upper cities of the universe. *Then* what do we want with fiery displays of God?—they would be out of keeping, out of reason and out of proportion. There are days that are themselves so bright, so hospitable, so long ending, and so poetic in all their breezes, and suggestions, and ministries that we seem not to want any dogmatic teaching about the personality and nearness of God. All beauty represents him. Any more emphatic demonstration would be out of harmony with the splendid serenity of the occasion. Then there are periods in life all night, all darkness, all storm or weariness. We cannot say where the door of liberty is, nor dare we step out lest we fall over a precipice; all is dark, all is trouble; friends are as absent as if they were dead, and all the sanctuaries to which we have hitherto resorted are concealed by the infinite darkness. What do we want then? A bird to sing to us? That would be helpful. A little tiny voice to break the troubled silence? That would not be amiss. But what do we really want? A column of fire, a pillar of glory, an emphatic incarnation and vision of Providence; and the soul gets both these manifestations of God according to the circumstances under which the soul is living. Take it, therefore, simply as an analogy, and then it is a rational analogy; it is true to every man's experience. And if the pillar of cloud and fire should drop off, there will remain the eternal truth, that according to the soul's circumstances is the Divine revelation of itself. Where the visible is enough why add more? A man should not want much theology of a formal sort on a bright summer day. Some little tuft of cloud will represent the

Infinite. Some almost invisible wing in the air—more a thought than a thing—hardly to be identified by the bodily eye, will symbolise the all-embracing power and the all-brooding love. Then at night we want what is called dogmatic teaching, broad emphasis, piercing declaration, vividness that cannot be mistaken, God almost within the clasping of the poor arms, God almost in sight of the eyes of the body. Thus God deals with us. This is true to our history. The mere cloud may go, the pillar of fire may be accepted as figurative; but the eternal truth that God comes to us in different ways under different circumstances—now as a cloud, now as a fire, now as a judgment, now as without mercy, now a roaring tempest, now a still small voice,—is a truth that remains whatever havoc may be wrought amid the mere figurativeness by which that truth is symbolised.

Then the cloud went behind the Israelites and separated between the camp of the chosen people and the camp of the Egyptians. That is occurring every day. Our circumstances have different readings from different points of view. It is possible for a life to be so lived that the enemy shall be afraid of it. The enemy shall say, "I do not understand this people; there is a mystery about them, say what you please, criticise them night and day with all possible sharpness and severity; there is a magic ring around them; there are circumstances attendant upon them which are the more perplexing in that they sometimes seem to be disasters: now we say, 'Everything is against them,' and presently the very things we thought to be against them turn out rather to the furtherance of their purposes." This is a mystery; and thus the Divine Providence turns a different view upon the Church and the world, the son and the alien, the family and the rebel-camp. So long, therefore, as these central truths can be attested and positively verified, why should we fritter away a splendid occasion by a petty criticism of mere figure, and robe, and parabolic symbol and representation? Thus, take it from the literal side, take it from the imaginative and parabolical, my faith has no difficulty whatever with the miracles, except when they are small. It rises to their majesty. The greater they are the more will every Nicodemus be compelled even at night time to steal out and say to the Worker, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that

thou doest, except God be with him." Mark how Nicodemus fixed upon the *quality* of the miracles—the miracles that separated themselves from the magician's wonders of heathen or cultivated lands.

"And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (xiv. 11, 12).

That is a miracle in very deed! That is the marvel that astounds the reason, the heart, the imagination, and the conscience. That is the miracle which grieves Heaven. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." That is the upsetting of the law of continuity. That is the violation of things permanent. That is an ugly and wicked twist in the movement of the law which you call "the persistence of force." After all they had seen,—after all the miracles of love, and grace, and deliverance, and comfort,—after all they had known of the government of God,—they turned round with so base a falseness and smote, as with darts seven times whetted, the heart of Moses their leader. That is the impossible miracle. How mean we are and paltry in our judgment and in thinking that the dividing of a sea or the breaking up of a firmament is the impossible thing, when every day we are working in our own degree and region moral miracles that make the breaking up and reconstruction of the universe mere child's fancy and child's play. Why do we not fix our attention upon moral incongruities,—violations of moral law, rebellion against natural instinct? He who smites his father or his mother violates every law of nature with a more forceful and violent hand than the God who interferes or intervenes in his own infinite machine—the universe—to do what pleaseth him for the good of his creatures. We like little intellectual puzzles;—we flee away because "conscience makes cowards of us all," from the violations of moral law of which we are guilty. We love to speak of "continuity,"—it costs us nothing; it does not wring the conscience, it does not set up a bar of judgment in the life; it has a bold resonance which we can utter without moral expense or agony;

therefore we play upon it; it delights our intellectual vanity. When we come to ourselves we shall know that we have sinned against Heaven and against ourselves and are no more worthy to be called children. In the sublime agony we shall forget all physical miracles in the stupendous wonder that we have grieved the Father's heart.

"And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left " (xiv. 22).

Did they really do this ? Why not ? Suppose we set aside the miraculous incident for a moment and ask : What does the writer mean to convey by this high imagining ? He means to convey this lesson, namely, that a way was found where a way was supposed to be impossible. Is that his meaning ? Yes. If that is so, the doctrine is verifying and illustrating itself every day in the history of every man. This then is the true miracle : —that when our poor life has been driven up to a point from which there seemed to be no escape, God has shown an opening in the rock, or a way through the deep ; and we who expected to perish because the way was ended have been enabled to enter upon larger liberties. Who will swear to that ? I will. Ten thousand times ten thousand witnesses will avouch it. There will be no halting in that oath ; and if you represent to us these deliverances as the breaking up of mountains, the dividing of seas, the cleaving in twain of deep and rapid-flowing rivers, we will say, " Pile up the parables, stir your imagination to some nobler figurativeness, for you can never by symbol, or dream, or romantic art, represent the whole truth which we have realised as to the delivering, protecting, preserving, redeeming providence of God."

Instead, therefore, of joining the unbelievers who waste life in trying to show that Almightiness cannot be Almighty, I prefer to begin the study from the other end and to say,—“Even if this be a figure, it is a happy one, for I have been in circumstances just of this very kind : the enemy behind me, the foe almost with his hand upon my weary back, and no way out of the difficulty has presented itself, and yet suddenly my extremity became God's opportunity, and at a bound I was beyond the reach of the destroyer.” We want personal testimony about matters of this

kind. We want such incidents proved by modern consciousness and present-day facts. That can be done,—and is being done. When the Church rises as one man and repeats the challenge of the psalmist—"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul"—the critic will first have to prove us false in our character and in our spirit before he can prove us false in our theology and our worship. Do not find fault with the manner in which the truth itself is presented. To find fault with the mere manner of conveying the truth is foolish, is unjust. We should seek the truth, realise it, own it, and abide by it.

Leaving the merely miraculous line, these incidents show us human life in a state of panic and distress.

"When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them ; and they were sore afraid : and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord " (xiv. 10).

How soon we are driven into a panic ! In the very midst of our prayers we are startled into atheism. A sudden fear shoots through the soul, sometimes in the very act of intercession, and petrifies the holy aspiration, so that we rise from the altar worse than when we bended down before its sacred stones. The incidents show us human nature in a spirit of rebellion and ingratitude. "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" How we are like staves that break in the hands of those who use them ! There is but a step between the truest friendship and the bitterest enmity. The brother who adores you to-day will hate you to-morrow, if you cross his will or stain his pride. Here is human life in a condition of utter helplessness.

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord " (xiv. 13).

These are noble times—times when we have to be everything by being nothing ; days when our poor arms have to fall down at our sides unable to do the very simplest thing in the way of self-deliverance or self-extrication from difficulty. This three-fold condition was the state of the world prior to the birth of Christ. The world was in a state of panic and distress ; the spirit of rebellion and ingratitude urged itself against the heavens, it had exhausted every possible means of self-deliverance and self-pro-

gress, and could go no further. It had begun a circular movement, and in its helpless rotation was dying of monotony. Suddenly there was a voice heard :—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." History took a new turn from that day. Account for it as you please—again resent the miraculous and supernatural element,—there is the fact, that to-day men will do more for Jesus Christ than for any other leader. The men who know him best love him most, and have entered most profoundly into his spirit. Paul was not a weak man,—Paul could take hold of an argument by both hands and weigh it, measure it, test it; Paul was a man who is proved by his mere style of writing and of speech to have been a man of great intellectual capacity as well as of fine moral quality,—a philosopher, a reasoner, a critic,—a man of most penetrating intellect and of ample judgment; and he, having approached this great miracle from the hostile side, left it at last, when he was old, bruised, stripped, almost dead, saying—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." It was a philosopher who said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was a critic who said, "I am crucified with Christ." It was an aristocrat of the highest Pharisaic blood who gathered together all pedigrees and genealogies and prides of families and said, "I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The Man who made such an impression on such a mind was himself a greater miracle than any wonder or sign which he performed before the imagination, the curiosity, or the unbelief of his contemporaries. Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory and dominion and all majesty day without end. Amen.

### Exodus xiv. 10.

"The children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them."

### OLD ENEMIES PURSUING.

SOME resemblances between the condition of the children of Israel in Egypt, in their flight from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and the condition of man in sin and his escape from the tyranny of the devil are obviously suggested. The state of Israel in Egypt was one of the severest depression. At every point the Israelites were overborne; their manhood was insulted; they had no rights, privileges or claims. Their time was not their own. If ever they looked up complainingly into the face of the taskmaster, their answer was another stroke of the lash. The light of their best nature was put out, and they were treated simply as beasts of burden. The political condition of Israel in Egypt in these particulars very fitly resembles the spiritual condition of man in a state of sin. However loud may be his boasting, he is a slave; however much he may think he has liberty which he can enjoy as he pleases, he can only go the length of a chain. Sin is slavery; sin is continual oppression. No man who has tasted of the bitterness of sin will contradict the statement, that a state of sin is a state of exhausted manhood. All that is noble, true, pure, and beautiful has been expelled from the nature; and there is nothing left behind but great gaps, blanks and voids, which the world cannot fill, and what hopes remain are only turned to the bitterness of disappointment and mortification. The enemy of Israel was powerful. Pharaoh had everything at his command; a nod was law; the lifting of a finger was equal to the extension of a sceptre; whenever Israel threatened to become rebellious he could bring forces to bear upon the rising that could soon crush it. He was powerful, they were weak; he was on the throne, they were under his feet—

and Pharaoh's feet were heavy! The spiritual condition of mankind in a state of sin is precisely the same. The enemy of man is powerful. When he is described by earthly figures, those figures themselves are terrible. He is a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour; he is a prince; he is the prince of the power of the air; he has all but unlimited resources; his hand is heavy and cruel, his arm is long, and we have no power to break it; he is subtle; he comes to us in a thousand ways we do not dream of; he comes to us along the streaming of music; he looks at us through the beauty of pictures; he meets us on the highway, smiles himself into our confidence, entangles us in many peculiar combinations. And when we say, "Now we shall be free," he says, "*Will* you?" No man who has lived deeply, who understands life, who has seen below the outside of things, but knows that sin gets a daily increasing power over him. The habit which to-day we can snap because it is but half-formed, will, in the course of a few weeks, become so strong as to mock all our strength. The young man says that he knows when to turn back. He may be perfectly sincere in saying that he has that good knowledge,—but is his power equal to his information? He says, "I will go down this way a certain distance; I will drink so much worldly pleasure; I shall sit so long at the devil's table; I shall just peep in behind the curtain which conceals hell; and then I will come back again after I have formed some idea of the reality of things in that direction." His purpose is very good; he fully intends to do what he says, but the footprints which he made on the road are rubbed out, and he has not gone down the road a mile before he loses all his bearings; he knows not which is east, west, north, south; going back and going forward are the same thing; he is locked up in the most terrible of jails—the prison of darkness! I point out these things with this care, not to wound or shock anyone's sensibilities or tastes, but to show who it is that has the sinner under his foot, and whose hand it is that strikes at everything good, and true, and beautiful in human nature. The enemy of man is powerful.

Israel *escaped* from the hand of Pharaoh. By a strong and mighty deliverance Israel was brought out from Egypt. The Israelites had gone along the road of promise and liberty so far,

but they turned round to look back, and behold, the Egyptians were after them! The Israelites had said, "Now we have escaped at last"; and behold the breath of the destroyer was breathed upon their necks! That is precisely the case with redeemed and liberated man in a spiritual sense. Upon this point I would speak with a good deal of remonstrance in one direction and hopefulness in another. With a good deal of remonstrance thus :

Here is a man who professes to have been redeemed from sin, and who has taken upon himself the Christian profession, and there is one who is watching him at a little distance who is expecting that the man will instantly step out of Egypt right into Canaan; and because the man is weak and worn, and less than half himself, some cruel word is used when he stumbles or falters a little! Is that right? Is that decent? Look at the man's condition, as typified by the circumstances. Israel in Egypt bowed down,—the hand of cruel tyranny upon his neck,—the lash of cruel oppression cutting his back to the bone. He has only been liberated a day. Do you expect him to stand erect, as if he had been a man for half a century? This is precisely what so many persons do in interpreting moral character and spiritual profession. Let me suppose that, at the age of forty, you have been saved from your sin; you have lifted up your face towards the light; you have taken the solemn pledge in the name and strength of God to be good and to do good. But your forty years' history is behind you,—forty years of moral exhaustion, forty years of spiritual tyranny; and because you cannot step right out of Egypt into Paradise you will find some persons who will mock you, and will say, "Ha, ha! Is this your piety? I thought you had become a Christian now. Is *this* your Christianity?" The mocker is never wanting in the good man's path. Those who have the cruel gift of taunting are never wanting to mock men who would live well, who would go in the right direction, and hold their worn faces and their streaming eyes towards the light of God.

I would speak hopefully. I would remind you that you cannot expect to escape from all your old associations in a moment. I would speak hopefully, because I know some of you have been distressed by the uprising of forces in your heart which you

thought had been settled and quenched for ever. A man cannot throw off his old past as he can throw off an old garment; he cannot strip himself and throw the old slave into the fire, and say, "Now I will begin at this point, and never have any connection with the past." Old slaveries, old tyrannies, old recollections, and habits, and companionships, will assert themselves in one way or another. It is more than a *step* from hell to heaven. You are now a professor of Christianity. Let me suppose you are sincere in your profession. You are ardent in your pursuit of Christian knowledge, you omit no opportunity of improving your spiritual faculties, you pray, you search the Scriptures, you attend helpful ministries; and yet you say, just when you think you are becoming safe and can take a little rest, and enjoy somewhat of the beauty and prospect of the scene,—just then the old devil, that you had supposed to be dead, turns over in your heart! It is not unnatural, it is not some strange thing that has happened to you. It is a long way from evil to goodness, from darkness to light, from the depths of sin to the highest attainments of grace! There will be many a struggle, many a reappearance of your old self; your old self will become a thousand ghosts, and they will frighten you. It is so with us all. We think now, after this lesson or that prayer, or some well-accepted appointments of God, that at last we have attained, and are something like already perfect; and suddenly an unexpected event occurs, and, to our own surprise, we find that, notwithstanding our hope of rest, we are in some respects as weak and as bad as ever we were—I am. I am no separated priest; but a man, a fellow-sufferer. I know this, and my heart cries over it bitterly; because it seems as though one never could be at rest, and never could say that we are complete and beyond the region of fear. In some directions we are so happy, so buoyant, so full of glad expectancy, and softened and chastened by the most hallowed influences, and yet in a moment we slip right down, back again into the old Egypt, where our condemnation was written in the dust, and the air was filled with the voice of our torment.

And there are persons who mock us! When a Christian man makes any slip at all, you know how bitter is the taunt that is levelled against him, as though he ought to have stepped clear out of Egypt right up to the throne of God,—as though there had

been no wilderness, and no Red Sea, and no long wandering, and no daily severe discipline. Let us be gentle with one another. We were in Egypt but yesterday, and the enemy will not let us go easily. The devil does not say, "You are going, are you? Yes; well, good-bye." No, no. Just as a man is going into heaven he makes a dash at the skirts of his garments; he fights battles in the chamber of death; he troubles the last hours of the saint, and it is not until heaven's door shuts upon the redeemed man that the devil gives up the pursuit with a sob of disappointment, and falls back to be the severer with those who are yet upon the earth!

There was an omnipotent and gracious Redeemer in the case of Israel; so there is in the case of redeemed men. We are not saved by sheer power. Power in itself considered is a terror; it is something very awful and unapproachable. But power in the hands of mercy becomes redemption. The Redeemer of Israel was not only powerful but gracious. The Israelites upon this occasion were sore afraid; they lifted up their eyes and they cried unto the Lord. They were weak; they had no strength left in them; and as for weapons of war, what had they? or if they had them, how could they use them with any successful effect when they had been so long trampled upon and unmanned and disquieted? There they were; and Egypt, mighty in her pride and cruel in her wrath, was upon their track. Egypt never knew the mystery of mercy. What was to be done then? The word reads so sweetly, the word is this: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Precisely the gospel that was adapted to their weak condition. If the command had been, "Rouse you; fight!" it would have been like asking dead men to fight those who were in the very bloom and pride of their strength. But the command is, "Stand still." The adaptation of God's message to our condition is so perfect, so gracious, so sufficient. When we are weak and cannot fight he says, "Stand still, and I will fight for you." When we have our energies in all their completeness, he says, "Rise! fight!" He meets us according to the condition that we are in. The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.

The Egyptians were to be seen that day for the last time. "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them

again no more for ever." How so? "Because the Lord will fight for you." When God shuts his hand he crushes Egypt. There will be no stir, or tumult, or great ado; the lifting up of his hand is destruction; the outlook of his eye annihilation; the breath of his nostrils is a wind that carries with it desolation and death, when he is so pleased. Here a little mistake was made by the great leader of Israel. I am so thankful when men like Moses stumble, because their stumbling gives inferior men hope and heart. Moses began to make it too much a question of prayer; he began to talk to the Lord as if it were a great case of grief and despondency, as if all difficulties had culminated in one terrific crisis. The Lord said unto him, "Moses, do not pray at all." He told them to do just as they were doing when they saw the Egyptians coming after them, namely, to go on.

Consider the circumstances. Israel was going on. Israel turned round and saw the Egyptians; and Israel was full of weakness, and trembling, and despair; and Moses spake unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, "Go on as if this thing had not happened; do not take it into your calculations at all; leave the Egyptians in my hands; there is a time to pray, but not now; only lift up thy rod, and stretch thy hand over the sea, and divide it, and behold I will get me honour upon Pharaoh and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." "All!" with holy, mighty scorn, he named them, and they seemed to perish whilst he enumerated them! Mighty in their degree, but when compared with Jehovah but so many insects fluttering in the air—a breath being able to destroy them.

Then occurred this beautiful incident. The angel of the Lord, which went before the camp of Israel all the journey long up to this hour, removed and went behind them. The angel of the Lord could do as he pleased. God is not the victim of law. God is the *Lawgiver*. Life is above law. For ages he has been yonder, in the front; when it pleaseth him he can turn round and be at the rear of things. He has a right to every chamber in his own house; he built it; he has the key of every room, he can enter when he pleases. On this occasion it pleased him to reverse the order of things, and from the van he came to the rear. So beautiful are his adaptations! He said to Israel, in effect and substance, "Are the Egyptians behind thee, O Israel? Then I

will come behind thee." "But the Egyptians are so very near to us, Lord!" "I can come between you and them, how near soever they be; I made all spaces, and have them all under my control, and though the Egyptians were just upon thy neck I could come in between you,—I will go behind." And Israel sang a song unto the Lord: "Thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid thine hand upon us." There are men who tell us that God must move in this direction and must move in that; they have been looking into affairs, they have been adding things up, and they have been drawing their conclusions, and the conclusion of the thing is this—that we are prisoners in the great jail of law. I am not. I am a prisoner of God's love; I am shut up in the great sanctuary of his heart. I believe he is greater than aught he has made; that the Lawgiver is greater than the law, and that he who established the universe has the key of its secret in his own heart. I teach this gracious truth because I have lived it; I have known its completeness, its excellence, and its redeeming power. God can be at one point to-day and at another to-morrow. He can be before them in this case, behind them in that; he determines all things by a sovereignty we cannot control. His sovereignty is his grace, at its highest point. The supremacy of love is the sovereignty of God. I will trust myself with the Most High, I will cast myself solely upon him, I will call him my Father and my King!

We are, then, in the wilderness; we have had long and bitter experience of sin, and that experience has made us very weak; we have been under a most powerful and oppressive enemy; he has never spared us, he has been severe with us; he has taken away from us all that made life strong and desirable and useful, and we have been redeemed by a gracious and omnipotent Redeemer; and still the great enemy has pursued us, as though he never, never would give us up whilst there seemed, even to himself, to his infernal hope, the slightest possible chance of recapturing us, and locking us up in his great prison-house. This is our condition; we are still in the wilderness; old associations still remind us of their existence, evil memories still trouble our recollection, ghosts and spectres of the past come to terrify us, even when we sit down at the board of Sacrament, and when we repeat the oath of Christian love at the Cross. But our

Redeemer is sufficient; he says to us in the time of despair, "I will come behind thee." When we are just giving up, and asking, "Who is sufficient for these things?" he says to us, in his own sweet voice, "My grace is sufficient for thee; thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be; no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, hath it not been told thee from the beginning, that the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." They shall be troubled on every side, but not distressed; cast down, but not destroyed; persecuted, but still there shall be room enough left for the triumphing of the grace of God. Sirs, your redemption is not of your own skill, energy, or wit. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." When there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, his own eye pitied, and his own arm brought salvation. And I am persuaded that he who hath begun this good work will continue it even unto the end.

Let us hope in this. Are you persecuting anybody? Are you pursuing any one who has escaped the clutches of your evil influence? Know this, that if their hearts be set on God, you cannot get at them. "Cannot get at them?" No. "But they are now within sight." But God could blind you, if you were within an inch of them. "Not get at them? Why, I can almost touch them now." Yes, you can *almost* do it, but your "almost" is to God as wide as infinitude. Are you pursued? Do you say you cannot get away from old influences, companions, associations, and conditions? Not all at once, but little by little. If you be in God and love his truth, the pursuit of the enemy will bring salvation nearer to you; if you cast your heart's poor weakness and distrust entirely upon his keeping,—then, nor mountain nor sea shall keep the pilgrim back from the Canaan of God!

**Exodus xiv. 31; xix. 7; xxxvi. 5.**

### **REDEEMING POINTS.**

**I**N the book of Exodus we have an account of the character of the people delivered by the power of Jehovah and guided and directed by the statesmanship of Moses. Sometimes in reading the history we think there never were such rebellious and stiff-necked people in all human history. Moses is often angry with them; the Lord himself often burns with indignation against them; sometimes, as cool and impartial readers, we feel the spirit of anger rising within us as we contemplate the selfishness, the waywardness, and the impracticableness of the children of Israel. We feel that they were altogether undeserving the grace, the compassion, the patient love which marked the Divine administration of their affairs. The spirit of impatience rises within us and we say, "Why does not God bury this stiff-necked and hard-hearted race in the wilderness and trouble himself no longer about people who receive his mercies without gratitude, and who seeing his hand mistake it for a shadow or for some common figure? Why does the great heart weary itself with a race not worth saving?" Sometimes the Lord does come nigh to the act of utter destruction: and it seems as if justice were about to be consummated and every instinct within us to be satisfied by the vindication of a power always defied and a beneficence never understood.

Give yourselves a little time to discover if you can the redeeming points even in so ungracious and so unlovable a history. It will indeed be a religious exercise, full of the spirit of edification and comfort, to seek some little sparkles of gold in this infinite mass of worthlessness. It will be quite worth a Sabbath day's journey to find two little grains of wheat in all this wilderness of chaff. Surely this is the very spirit of compassion and love, this is the very poetry and music of God's administration, that he is

always looking for the redeeming points in every human character. Allowing that the mass of the history is against the people: still there cannot be any escape from that conclusion. If it were a question of putting vice into one scale and virtue into the other, and a mere rough exercise in avoirdupois-weighting, the Israelites could not stand for one moment. To find out the secret of patience, to begin to see how it is that God spares any man, surely is a religious quest in the pursuit of which we may expect to find, and almost to see face to face, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Moses, having come from the Divine presence:

“called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (xix. 7, 8).

That was an outburst of religious emotion; that exclamation showed that the heart was not all dead through and through. That one sentence might be remembered amidst many a hurricane of opposition and many a tumult of ungrateful and irrational rebellion. We understand this emotion perfectly. There have been times in our most callous lives when we have caught ourselves singing some great psalm of adoration, some sweet hymn holding in it the spirit of testimony and pledge and holy oath. It would seem as if God set down one such moment as a great period in our lives—as if under the pressure of his infinite mercy he magnified the one declaration which took but a moment to utter into a testimony filling up the space of half a lifetime. It is long before God can forget some prayers. Does it not seem as if the Lord rather rested upon certain sweet words of love we spoke to him even long ago, than as if he had taken a reproach out of our mouth at the moment and fastened his judgment upon the severe and ungrateful word? Is it not within the Almighty love to beat out some little piece of gold into a covering for a long life? It is not his delight to remember sins or to speak about the iniquities which have grieved his heart, or to dig graves in the wilderness for the rebellious who have misunderstood his purpose and his government. “His mercy endureth for ever,” and if we have ever spoken one true prayer to heaven, it rings, and resounds, and vibrates, and throbs again like music he will never willingly silence. It would seem as if one little prayer might quench the

memory of ten thousand blasphemies. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Here you find a religious responsiveness which ought to mark the history of the Church and the history of the individual as well.

"The people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses" (xiv. 31).

Every good thing is set down. The Lord is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith. We wonder sometimes in our ignorance whether any little sign of good that has been in the heart is not written most legibly in heaven; and all things unlovely, undivine, so written that none but God can decipher the evil record. It would be like our Father to write our moral virtues in great lustrous characters and all the story of our sin and shame so that no angel could read a word of it. This is the way of love. How much we talk about the little deed of kindness when we want to save some character from fatal judgment, from social separation, and from all the penalties of evil behaviour! There is no monotony in the recital; love invents new phrases, new distributions of emphasis, wondrous variations of music, and so keeps on telling the little tale of the flower that was given, of the smile that was indicative of pleasure, of the hand that was put out in fellowship and pledge of amity. Again and again the story so short is made into quite a long narrative by the imagination of love, by the marvellous language which is committed to the custody of the heart. It is God's way. If we give him a cup of cold water, he will tell all the angels about it; if we lend him one poorest thing he seems to need, he will write it so that the record can be read from one end of the earth to the other; if we give him some testimony of love,—say one little box of spikenard,—he will have the story of the oblation told where-soever his gospel is preached. Yes, he will tell about the gift when he will hide the sin; he will have all his preachers relate the story of the penitence in such glowing terms that the sin shall fall into invisible perspective. God is looking for good; God is looking for excellences, not for faults. Could we but show him one little point of excellence, it should go far to redeem from needful and righteous judgment and penalty a lifetime of evil-doing.

"The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work" (xxxvi. 5).

There is a redeeming point. The spirit of willingness is in the people. They have a good season now; they are in their best moods at this time; they are most generous; they come forward in their very best force and look quite godly in their daily devotion and service to the tabernacle. Surely in the worst character there are some little faint lines of good! Why do we not imitate God and make the most of these? We are so prone to the other kind of criticism: it seems to be in our very heart of hearts to find fault; to point out defections; to write down a whole record and catalogue of infirmities and mishaps, and to hold up the writing as a proof of our own respectability. God never does so; he is righteous on the one side and on the other; he never connives at sin; he never compromises with evil; he never fails to discriminate between good and bad, light and darkness, the right hand and the left; but when he does come upon some little streak of excellence, some faint mark of a better life, he seems to multiply it by his own holiness, and to be filled with a new joy because of pearls of virtue which he has found in a rebellious race. Character is not a simple line beginning at one point and ending at another, drawn by the pencil of a child and measurable by the eye of every observer. Character is a mystery; we must not attempt to judge character. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." The Pharisees dragged up those whom they found doing wrong, but their doing so was never sanctioned by the Master; in all their attempts at judgment they were judged; whenever they displayed their virtue he burnt up the rag and left them to carry the cinders away. This should lead us to much seriousness in estimating character, and should keep us from uncharitableness; but at the same time it should encourage our own souls in the pursuit and quest of things heavenly. We do not know the meaning of all we feel and do. Let me suppose that some man is not regarded by others as religious and spiritual; let it be my business as a Christian shepherd to find out some point in that character upon which I can found an argument and base an appeal. I may find it sometimes in one great hot tear: the man would not have allowed me to see

that tear on any account if he could have helped it, but I did see it, and having seen it I have hope of his soul. He is not damned yet. I may notice it in a half-intention to write to the wronged ones at home. The young man has taken up his pen and begun to address the old parents whose hearts he has withered. When I observe him in the act of dipping his pen, I say, "He was dead and is alive again"; and though he should lay down the pen without writing the letter of penitence, I have hope in him: he may yet write it and make the confession and seek the absolution of hearts that are dying to forgive him. Do not tell me of the spendthrift's course, do not heap up the accusation—any hireling can be bribed to make out the black catalogue; be it ours to see the first heavenward motion, to hear the first Godward sigh, and to make the most of these signs of return and submission. Good and bad do live together in every character. I never met a human creature that was all bad: I have been surprised rather to see in the most unexpected places beautiful little flowers never planted by the hand of man. All flowers are not found in gardens, hedged and walled in, and cultured at so much a day; many a flower we see was never planted by the human gardener. In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Heaven. At the risk of incurring the unkind judgment of some in that I may be ministering to your vanity—how they mistake the case who reason so!—I will venture to say that in every one, however unrecognised by the constables of the Church or by the priests of the altar, there are signs that they are not forsaken of God.

Now comes the thought for which I have no language adequate in copiousness or fit in delicateness. It would seem as if the little good outweighed the evil. God does not decide by majorities. There is not a more vulgar standard of right and wrong than so-called majorities; it is an evil form of judgment wholly—useful for temporary purposes, but of no use whatever in moral judgment. The majority in a man's own heart is overwhelming. If each action were a vote, and if hands were held up for evil, a forest of ten thousand might instantly spring up; and then if we called for the vote expressive of religious desire, there might be one trembling hand half extended. Who counts?—God. What says he? How rules he from his throne? It will be like him

to say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If he could find out in our life that we once dropped on one knee, and began a prayer, there is no telling what may be done by his love in multiplying the act into an eternal obeisance and regarding the unfinished prayer as an eternal supplication. This is how the judgment will go. God has not forsaken us. To open his book with any desire to find in it reading for the soul is a proof that we are not abandoned of our Father; to go into the sanctuary even with some trouble of mind or reluctance of will—to be there is a sign that we are not yet cast out into the darkness infinite.

Yet even here the stern lesson stands straight up and demands to be heard—namely :—If any man can be satisfied with the little that he has, he has not the little on which he bases his satisfaction. It is not our business to magnify the little; we do well to fix our mind for long stretches of time upon the evil, and the wrong, and the foul, and the base. It is not for us to seek self-satisfaction; our place is in the dust; our cry should be "Unclean! unprofitable!"—a cry for mercy. It is God's place to find anything in us on which he can base hope for our future, or found a claim for the still further surrender of our hostile but still human hearts.

## Exodus xv. 1-21.

1. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously : the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3. The Lord is a man of war : the Lord is his name.

4. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.

5. The depths have covered them : they sank into the bottom as a stone.

6. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power : thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

7. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee : thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

8. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

9. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied upon them ; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

10. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them : they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

11. Who is like unto thee O Lord, among the gods ? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?

12. Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

13. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

14. The people shall hear, and be afraid : sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

15. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed ; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them ; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

16. Fear and dread shall fall upon them ; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone ; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

17. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in ; in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

18. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

19. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea; and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

20. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

### THE SONG OF DELIVERANCE.

THE spirit of this song is above verbal criticism. This is the first composition of the sort which has come under our notice, and therefore it occasions the greater surprise and delight. We are not just to the song when we go back upon it from a perusal of Isaiah. We put the song into a wrong time-setting, and therefore miss the music of the occasion. Yet even to go back upon it from a perusal of "Paradise Lost" no whit of its magnificence is surrendered. It is not, I assert, a fair treatment of the song, to go back upon it from all the poetic experience and culture of many generations and centuries. In the interpretation of Holy Scripture time is an instrument, or a medium, or a standard, which ought never to be neglected. Who is conscious of an intellectual fall from the perusal of Milton to the perusal of this song of Moses? He sings well for the first time. It is a marvellous song to have been startled out of his very soul, as it were, without notice. Verily, he must have been as much surprised as we by its magnificence, by its height that knows no dizziness, and by its audacity that loses nothing of the tenderest veneration. Milton staggers under the stars of poetry which he has enkindled, but Moses treads the nobler orbs of a sublimer fancy under his feet. Milton cringes under an effort; he is exhausted; when he has done he sighs and pines for rest, and puts out a blind man's hand for something to lean upon. He must have time to recruit and re-tempt the muse into eloquence so high. Moses speaks his native tongue; the singing of Moses is as the breathing of a man who is in his native air, and who is not conscious of speaking more like a god than the creature of a day. But what is the poem or song, when we do not go back

upon it from Milton, but advance to it through the strife and hatred, the sin and the danger, of the preceding pages? *That* is the right line of approach. It is manifestly unfair to judge earlier poetry by later standards. Who would think it just to judge the first mechanical contrivances by present mechanical inventions? Would it be fair to the very first locomotive that was ever made to compare it with the locomotives of to-day, that seem to challenge the wind and the lightning? Every man would protest against such comparison and criticism. The fair-minded man would protest that the right way to judge of any contrivance or invention, would be to come up to it along the line of its development, and to judge it by its own day and its own atmosphere. That is right. But when you compare earlier poetry with later, and say the old is better, how do you account for that? "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Moses could not amend the song. Is there a genius now living who could paint this lily? Point out one weak line in all the mighty pæan; change one figure for a better. Where this is the case and considering the times and circumstances, do we not feel as if approaching the beginning of an argument for the profoundest view of Biblical inspiration? We have sometimes tried to amend one of Christ's parables, and nowhere could we replace one word by a better. Authors wish to go back upon their works, to retouch them; they issue new editions, "revised and corrected." Who can correct this Song? Who can enlarge its scope, ennoble its courage, or refine its piety?

We feel ourselves under the influence of the highest ministry that has yet touched us in all these ancient pages. Our critical faculty is rebuked. Religious feeling has found sweet music to express its eloquence, and now we are carried away by the sacred storm. The heart will not permit grammatical analysis. The people are aflame with thankfulness, and their gratitude roars and swells like an infinite tempest, or if for a moment it falls into a lull, it is only to allow the refrain of the women with timbrels to be answered by the thrilling soprano of Miriam, for she answered the women, saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Then with the clang of timbrels and the

tumult of the solemn dance Israel expressed thankfulness to the delivering God. The Church has now no great days of song—whole days spent in praise, with a tumultuous harmony of trumpet and cornet, flute and clarionet, bassoon and sharp fife : men and women pouring their hearts' emotions forth in broad song shot through and through with the silver threads of children's brighter praise. The Church now objects to timbrels. To that objecting Church I do not belong. That objecting Church I disavow. We are making atheists in multitudes. We have turned the trumpet into an atheist, and the drum, and the flute, and the whole organ. We have shut them up for wicked enjoyment. Every Sabbath morning the city or town should vibrate with the crash of instruments religiously played. We must rid ourselves of the bigots who are impoverishing Christ's Church, who are loading the Church with the burden of their cold respectability. We pay too heavy a price for the keeping of such men amongst us. The Church is now adjusting opinions, bandying controversial words, branding small heretics, and passing impotent resolutions; the timbrel is silent, the trumpet is dumb, the drum throbs no longer, the song is a paid trick in gymnastics, not a psalm bound for heaven. We have killed music in the Church. Who would not have music all day? It would refine us, it would ennoble us, it would show us the littleness and meanness of verbal criticism and paltry opinion, and fill the soul with Divinest breath. Why this atheistic silence? Are there no deliverances now? Is God no longer our God, and our fathers' God? The great slave orator, Frederick Douglas, is reported to have said in a mournful speech, on a dark day for his race: "The white man is against us, governments are against us, the spirit of the times is against us; I see no hope for the coloured race; I am full of sadness." Having concluded this melancholy utterance, a poor, little, decrepit coloured woman rose in the audience, and said, "Frederick is God dead?" In a moment the whole spirit of the man was changed. He had forgotten the principal thing—speaking about white people, and governments, and spirit of the times, and forgetting the only thing worth remembering. Why this atheistic silence? Those who believe in God should not be afraid of his praise on a scale and after a method which will

make people wonder and tremble, and for a time flee away. Music is better than argument. You can always answer a statement—it is difficult to reply to a song.

We must be careful to distinguish between true praise and mere rhapsody. The song of Moses is simply history set to music. Through the whole song there is a line of what may be termed historical logic. Are these flowers? Underneath the soil in which they grow are infinite rocks of solid, positive fact and experience. Those who sang the song witnessed the events which they set to music. I protest against music ever being set to frivolous and worthless words. That is profanation. Such music is made into mere rhapsody; it is turned into sound without sense; it is a voice and nothing more. The music should owe all its nobility to the thought which it expresses. Persons who know not whereof they affirm have sometimes foolishly said that the words are nothing—it is the music that is everything. As well say the tree is nothing—the blossom is all. The words are the necessity of the music. The thought is so ardent, tender, noble, celestial, that it asks for the vehicle of a universal language for its exposition, and not for the loan of a dialect that is provincial or local. Even where there are no words to express—where the music is purely instrumental—the thought should be the majesty of the execution. We do not need words to tell us what music is in certain relations. Without the use of a single word we can easily tell the difference between the jingle meant for a clown's dance, and the passion which expresses the fury of war or the agony of grief. So you can have thought without words—a noble expression without the use of syllables that can be criticised. But whether you have words in the ordinary sense of the term, or thought without words, the music is but the expression of the soul's moods, purposes, vows, prayers, and as such it can be distinguished even by those who have had no critical musical culture. We know the cry of earnestness from the whimper of frivolity. We need not hear a word, and yet we can say, "That is a cry of pain, and that is a song of folly." Music is the eloquence which flies. If, then, our music is poor, it is because our piety is poor. Where the heart is right it will insist upon having the song, the dance, the festivity, the banner of gold written with God's name in the

centre of it. Poor piety will mean poor singing ; small religious conceptions will mean narrow services scampered through with all possible haste, so much so that decency itself may be violated. A glowing piety—a noble thought of God—then where will be the dumb tongue, the vacant face, the eye without accent or fire ? Realise the deliverance, and you cannot keep back the song ; exclude the providence, and silence will be easy.

The spirit which would degrade poetry into prose is a more destructive spirit than is sometimes imagined. Whoever would turn poetry into prose would destroy all beauty. There are some who boast of being prosaic. Let us not interfere with the fool's feast ! Those who would take out of life its poetry, colour, fire, enthusiasm, would silence all bells, put out all light, extinguish all joy, cut down all flowers, terminate the children's party when the children are in the very agony of the rapture. They are bad men. I know no crime that lies beyond their doing, if they could perform it without detection. The spirit that would make prose in life, at the expense of life's too little poetry, is the enemy of love. It is an evil spirit. It values the house more than the home. Its treasure is laid up where moth and dust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. It is a Pharisee who has no kiss for the celestial guest. It is a destroyer who would take the lily-work from the top of the pillar. It is an enemy that would take away the garden from the tomb. At first it does not appear to be so, but by appearances we must not finally and conclusively judge. Have faith in any man who stoops to pick a wayside flower for the flower's sake—because of the colour that is in it, the suggestions with which its odour is charged, and the symbolism which writes its mystery in the heart of the modest plant. The house is not wholly deserted of God that has its little sprig of Christmas holly in it. The heart that thought of the holly may have a great deal of badness in it, but there is one little point that ought to be watched, encouraged, enlarged.

Music should not be occasional. Music should express the life. We cannot always be singing great triumph-songs ; but music will come down to minor keys, to whispered confidences, to almost silent ministries. There are soft-toned little hymns that can be sung even when there is a coffin in the house. Who would argue

at the grave? yet who would not try, though vainly because of the weakness of the flesh, to sing there in memory of disease exchanged for health, time enlarged into eternity, corruption clothed with immortality?

We, too, have a sea to cross. We are pursued; the enemy is not far behind any one of us. The Lord has promised to bring us to a city of rest, and, lie between us and our covennated land what may, it shall be passed. That is the speech of faith. We, too, shall sing, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." We, too, shall sing; the dumb shall break into praise, the cry will be, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "All the angels stood round about the throne, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

It shall not always be grim silence with us. We shall learn the song of Moses and the Lamb. Then all argument will have ceased; controversy will have fought out its little wordy fight and have forgotten its bitterness and clamour, and all heaven shall be full of song. They shall sing who enter that city the song of Moses and of the Lamb. But we begin it upon earth. There is no magic in death; there is no evangelising power in the grave, whither we haste. The song begins now, because it immediately follows the deliverances and benedictions of Providence. It may be a hoarse song, uttered very poorly, in the judgment of musical canons and according to pedantic and scholastic standards; but it shows that the soul is alive, and would sing if it could; and God knows what our poor throats and lips would do were we equal to the passions of the soul, and therefore he accepts the broken hymn, the poorly-uttered psalm of adoration, as if it were uttered with thunder, and held in it all the majesty of heaven.

### **Exodus xv. 23-25.**

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

### **MOSES AT MARAH.**

THE children of Israel had just concluded their song of thankfulness for deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh and his hosts. A very wonderful song too had they sung. It might have had the thunder for an accompaniment, so solemn was it and so majestic. It rises and falls like the great billows of the sea. Now it roars by reason of its mightiness, and presently it subsides into a tone of tremulous pathos. The children of Israel had been made "more than conquerors"; they had not simply conquered by the expenditure of every energy as is sometimes done in hotly contested fields,—they had actually stood still, and in their standing had seen the salvation of God. Their references to Pharaoh and his hosts were made in a tone of derisive victory. "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea." "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea,"—thrown, as a child might throw a pebble into the deep! After singing such a song, Israel will never again know the meaning of doubt or fear. The singing of such a song marks an epoch in the history of life. In the presence of difficulty Israel will remember this hour of holy triumphing, and under the inspiration of such a recollection will surmount every obstacle. Is not this a reasonable supposition? Will not the greatest event in life rule all secondary events, and determine all subordinate considerations?

Surely, if this hour could be forgotten, the fear of death might return upon those who have already conquered the grave. Alas! we soon find how much difference there is between singing a hymn and living a life. The people had not gone more than three days into the wilderness of Shur when they showed the fickleness of the most intensely religious passion, and the inconstancy of the profoundest religious homage.

1. "They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter,"—*so the greatest triumphs of life may be succeeded by the most vexatious inconveniences.* God had divided the Red Sea for his people, yet he suffered them to go into places where there was no water to drink! For their sakes he had destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts, yea, his chariots and his chosen captains, yet he allowed them to suffer the pain of thirst! It is specially to be observed that the children of Israel were actually in the right way when they found themselves exposed to this inconvenience. Could we have learned that the people had strayed but one yard from the appointed path, we should have found in that fact an explanation of this trial. We should have exclaimed as men who have suddenly discovered the key of a great difficulty—"See what comes of disobedience to the Divine voice! If the people had walked in the way marked out for them by the Almighty, their bread and their water would have been sure, but now that they have taken the course into their own hands, they come to bitter streams which they cannot drink!" The contrary, however, is the fact of the case. The people marched along the very road which God intended them to occupy, and in that very march they came upon waters that were bitter. Is it not often so in our own life? We have been delivered from some great trial, some overwhelming affliction which brought us to the very gates of death, some perplexity which bewildered our minds and baffled our energies, and then we have lifted up our hearts in adoring songs to the Deliverer of our lives, and have vowed to live the rest of our days in the assured comfort arising from the merciful interposition and gracious defence of God; yet we have hardly gone three days' march into the future before we have come upon wells which have aggravated the thirst we expected them to allay. Compared with the great deliverance, the trial itself may

seem to be trifling, yet it becomes an intolerable distress. Suffer not the tempter to suggest that the trial has befallen you because of disobedience. History has again and again shown us that the field of duty has been the field of danger, and that the way which has conducted directly from earth to heaven has been beset by temptations and difficulties too great for human strength. You may be right, even when the heaviest trial is oppressing you. You may be losing your property, your health may be sinking, your prospects may be clouded, and your friends may be leaving you one by one, yet in the midst of such disasters your heart may be steadfast in faithfulness to God. If, however, we are able to trace our trial to some outward or inward sin, then indeed it well becometh us to bow down before the God of heaven and to utter the cry of penitence at the Cross of Jesus Christ, if haply we may be forgiven.

2. "The people murmured against Moses,"—*so the greatest services of life are soon forgotten.* Instead of saying to Moses, "Thou art our leader, and we will trust thee; we remember thy services in the past, and we believe thee to be under the inspiration of God," the children of Israel turned round upon Moses and openly treated him as incapable, if not treacherous. Where was their recollection of the overthrow of Pharaoh? Where was the memory of the thunderous and triumphant song which they sang when the sea covered the chariots and horsemen of the tyrant king? The people murmured and whimpered like disappointed children, instead of bearing their trial with the fortitude of men and the hope of saints. So soon do we forget the great services which have been rendered by our leaders. Moses was the statesman of Israel, yet see how he was treated when he came upon difficulties over which he had no personal control! It is so that we deal with our own patriots: they think for us, they scheme for us, they involve themselves in the most exhausting labour on our account; so long as they repeat our sentiments, and give effect to our wishes, we laud them and write their names upon the bright banner, but let them turn round and utter a conviction with which we cannot sympathise, or propose a scheme with which we are but ill-fitted to grapple, so comprehensive is its scope and so numerous its details, and in a moment

we strike them in the face and trample their reputation in the dust. We do the same with our preachers. We want our preachers to be but echoes. So long as they will say from the pulpit the things which we have been saying with cuckoo-like regularity for many years, we call them excellent preachers, and pay them their paltry dole with as much enthusiasm as small natures can feel; but if they attempt to lead us into unwonted tracks, if they do but suggest in the most remote and delicate manner that possibly there are some truths which we have not yet mastered, the probability is we shall in an hour forget the pastoral solicitude and the ministerial zeal of years, and treat as enemies the men who have been our wisest and gentlest friends.

3. "And Moses cried unto the Lord!"—so *magnanimous prayer is better than official resignation*. Think what Moses might have said under the circumstances! With what indignation he might have answered the murmuring mob! "Am I God that I can create wells in the desert? Are we not moving under the express command of Heaven, and has not God some purpose in leading us this way? Do I drink at a secret well of pure water, and leave you to be poisoned by waters that are diseased! Avaunt, ye unreasoning and ungrateful reptiles, and learn the elements of civility and the first principles of morality." Instead of speaking so, what did Moses do? *He cried unto the Lord!* All great leaderships should be intensely religious, or they will assuredly fail in the *patience* without which no strength can be complete. The question was not between Moses and Israel, it was between Moses and the Almighty One, revealed by the gracious names of the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; hence to that Almighty One Moses directed his appeal. Did the chief relations of life subsist wholly between the human parties involved, there might be a ready way of escaping from difficulty and vexation; such however is not the fact; the relation of parent and child, or of pastor and church, or of strong and weak, is not a relation complete in itself,—it has a religious basis, and it involves religious responsibility. What then are men to do when they are assailed by murmuring and distrust from those who are under their care? They are not to take the high and mighty plan of standing on their so-called

dignity, nor are they at liberty to enter the chariot of their own proud indignation, that they may pass away into quieter realms ; they must take the case to him who is Lord and Master, and must wait the indication of his will. I cannot think of the patience of Moses, or of any man or woman who has ever been concerned in the best training of life, without seeing in such patience a faint emblem of that higher patience which is embodied in the life and ministry of the Saviour of mankind ! Were he not patient with us beyond all that we know of human forbearance and hope, he would surely consume us from the face of the earth, and so silence for ever the voice of our petulant and unreasoning complaint ; but he cares for us, he yearns over us ; when we strive most vehemently against him, when we smite his back and pluck the hair from his cheek, he inquires with agony of wounded love, "How shall I give thee up ?"

"Kindled his relentings are ;  
Me he still delights to spare ;  
Cries—How shall I give thee up ?  
Let's the lifted thunder drop."

Parents, instead of resigning the oversight of your children, pray for them ! Pastors, instead of resigning your official positions, pray for those who despitely use you ! All who in anywise seek to defend the weak, or lead the blind or teach the ignorant, instead of being driven off by every unreasonable murmuring, renew your patience by waiting upon God !

4. "And the Lord shewed him a tree,"—so *where there is a bane in life, there is also an antidote*. The water was bitter, but there was a tree of healing at hand ! Things are never so bad in reality as they often appear to be. Undoubtedly there are bitter experiences, but quite as undoubtedly there are remedies precisely adapted to these experiences. The tree was not created in order to meet the case : it was actually standing there at the time of the complaint. The cure is often much nearer us than our irrational distrust will allow us to suppose. Remember that the tree was not discovered by Moses himself : it was specially pointed out by the Lord. God is the Teacher of true methods of healing the body, as well as the only source of spiritual salvation. We may divide the spheres amidst which we live, and may for

the sake of convenience call one Agriculture, another Medicine, another Architecture, and others by distinguishing names, but, regarded profoundly and truly, human life is still under a Theocracy. Theology contains all that is true in art and in science, as well as the doctrines which apply to our highest capabilities and aspirations. An ancient saint looking upon the ploughman and upon the sower, and observing how they prepared the earth to bring forth and bud, that there might be bread for the world, exclaimed, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." The true physician is inspired of Heaven; so is the true poet; so is the true painter; so also is the true preacher. We must not narrow theology until it becomes a sectarian science; we must insist that within its expansiveness are to be found all things and all hopes which minister to the strength and exalt the destiny of human life.

Hast thou come, my friend, in thy wilderness way, to the place of bitter waters? Canst thou not drink of the stream, even though thy thirst be burning and thy strength be wasted? Know thou, there is a tree the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations! A tree? Truly so; but a tree as yet without a leaf,—a tree bare as the frosts and the winds of winter can make it,—the great, grim, dear, sad, wondrous Cross of the Son of God! Some have sought to touch the wells of life with other trees, but have only aggravated the disease which they sought to cure. By the grace of Heaven others have been enabled to apply the Cross to the bitter wells of their sin and grief, and behold the waters have become clear as the crystal river which flows fast by the throne of God!

## Exodus xvi.

1. And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin (exactly one month after the departure from Egypt), which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

2. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured (this is the third murmuring) against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness :

3. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God (Heb. omits the word *God*) we had died by the hand of the Lord (perhaps an allusion to the last of the plagues) in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full (a compliment to Egypt); for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4. Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day (a day's meal for a day), that I may prove them (what God did in Eden) whether they will walk in my law, or no.

5. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day (in Egypt the week of seven days was at this time unknown) they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

6. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt :

7. And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

8. And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.

9. And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord: for he hath heard your murmurings.

10. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (the pillar of the cloud is meant).

11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12. I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto

them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.

13. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up (the common quail is very abundant in the east), and covered the camp : and in the morning the dew lay round about the host (literally, there was a lying of dew).

14. And when the dew that lay was gone up (drawn by the heat of the sun), behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

15. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna (what is this ?) ; for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat (and which they did eat for forty years).

16. This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer (about three pints English) for every man (for every head), according to the number of your persons ; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

17. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

18. And when they did mete it with an omer (publicly measured in the camp), he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack ; they gathered every man according to his eating.

19. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

20. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses ; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank : and Moses was wroth with them.

21. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating : and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

22. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man : and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses (who had either not made known the law, or the rulers had forgotten it).

23. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord (not *the* rest. The absence of the article intimates that it is a new thing that is announced) : bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe ; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

24. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade : and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

25. And Moses said, Eat that to-day ; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord : to-day ye shall not find it in the field.

26. Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

27. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

28. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws ?

29. See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days ; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

30. So the people rested on the seventh day.
31. And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna : and it was like coriander seed, white (a small round grain, of a whitish or yellowish grey) ; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.
32. And Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations ; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.
33. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.
34. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony to be kept.
35. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited ; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.
36. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.

### MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS.

**A**LWAYS remember that these are the people who had just been singing. Whatever they did they seemed to do with a will. We thrilled under their song : we called it sublime, religiously impressive, and morally full of the spirit of education and comfort. The song has hardly died away from their lips when they begin to murmur. They first murmured at Marah because the waters were bitter, and now they murmur in the wilderness because food is scanty. There are many people who sing with great expression and fervour when everything is going just as they want it to go. Their song is full of emptiness ; it is a vain speech and a profanation of music. There are many such living and have lived in all ages. We know how their business is going by the way in which they accost us. They have no souls. Always remember, further, that just one month had elapsed since the departure from Egypt. The poet makes a point of the two little months that had elapsed between two circumstances which were apparently incongruous and irreconcilable. He cries the more bitterly when he says,—“But two months—two little months !” Here that act, so startling, marked by cruelty and by baseness of design, is completely out-done : for there was but one month—one little month between the mighty deliverance and the atheistic murmuring. It is difficult to have a solid piety—really four-square, permanent in its dignity, inde-

pendent of all circumstances, except so far as its immediate being is concerned,—a piety founded upon a rock lifting up its turrets and pinnacles to the sky, defying all wind, and thunder, and tumult of the elements. Until we realise such a piety as that, our education is immature and incomplete.

Observe how the most astounding miracles go for nothing. Then the miracles were nothing to those who observed them. They were applauded at the time, they sent a little thrill through those who looked upon them with eyes more or less vacant and meaningless ; but as to solid result, educational virtue and excellence, the miracles might as well not have been wrought at all. It was the same in the days of Jesus Christ. All his miracles went for nothing amongst many of the people who observed them. A miracle is a wonder, and a wonder cannot be permanent. Wonders soon drop into commonplaces, and that which astounded at first lulls at last,—yea, that which excited a kind of groping faith may by repetition soon come to excite doubt and scepticism and fear. What wonder, then, if the miracles having thus gone down in importance and value, the most splendid personal services followed in their wake ? This is a necessary logic ; this is a sequence that cannot be broken. He who goes down on the Divine or upward side of his nature must go down on the human and social side in the same proportion ; when faith in miracles goes, faith in all that is noblest in brotherhood will follow it. A kind of socialism will be trumped up, a species of commonwealth will be attempted, men will try to make up for their non-religion by their surplus philanthropy ; but the adequate truths being absent the attempt will end in spasm, and impotence, and uselessness. We owe more to the religious element than we suppose. Religion is not confined to the region of contemplation, speculation, metaphysical inquiry, secret and ineffective worship. It comes down into all the lines of life ; it lifts up common speech into uncommon eloquence ; it raises out of the stones children unto Abraham ; it turns the common supper-bread into a symbol of the Lord's body. Do not let us imagine, then, that we can dismiss faith in the miracles, faith in inspiration, faith in the Bible,—and yet retain society in all its deepest meaning and tenderest ministries and noblest uses. When the altar falls, the home is no longer safe.

Observe what an effect long servitude had produced upon the children of Israel. Was there ever a meaner cry than this :—“Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full”? That is not manly. How is such *unmanliness* of whining and whimpering to be accounted for? By long subjugation; by days and months and years and generations of servitude. The man can be driven out of the man; the man can be debased into almost a beast of burden. He can forget his yesterdays, his heaven-pointing book, his prayer, and all the upward look that made him almost an angel. Servitude has done this in every country; and we cannot expect people who have been for generations in bondage to stand up and claim intellectual equality with men who have been living under the sun of freedom century after century. The criticism would be unfair. Were this a merely historical matter, it would be of comparatively little consequence; but it is a spiritual matter. The eternal form of the lesson is this :—that servitude to sin takes the pith out of manhood. A man cannot be both a bad man and a strong man. The law—unwritten, if you please—of heaven, of the eternities is against this anomaly. Repeat the sin, and you drop into a deeper baseness; renew your loyalty to the devil, and your power of resisting him goes down with every new act of obeisance. So the time comes when the strong man becomes himself in abject servility to the foe. He who once could say No with all the roundness and emphasis of the thunder, can now only whisper his consent to the temptations of the devil. Virtue grows stronger and stronger. He that hath clean hands becomes a mightier man every day; at the last he is a giant, as in the midst he was a hero.

What do the people do? They rest in second causes. The people saw no further than Moses and Aaron: they complained against their leaders; they murmured against the Divinely-appointed princes of Israel. What is the all-healing method of looking at things?—looking at the whole, or taking a comprehensive view. This is the difficulty of all time. It is the supreme trial of many men. Who can see a whole horizon? Who has ■ pivotal mind that can turn round and see all that there is to be

seen? We suffer from our very intensity of mind,—that is to say, from our power of fixing the attention upon one point only and not taking the whole circle and the whole balance of the Divine economy. What a difference there is amongst men in this respect! How needful it is to get rid of the sophism that one man is equal to another, or is upon a level with another, or is to be accounted only as one by any other. We need correction upon the matter of personality. Moses was more than a person in the narrow and familiar sense of that term. So are all the prophets and leaders of the Church, so are all the seers and mighty men of God in every age. Luther was not one; Wesley was not one—simply a man, a figure, a unit. There are personalities that are compendiums; there are individualities that are full of nations and empires and fatherhoods of glory. There are Abrahams who have in them a multitude no more to be counted than is the sand upon the sea-shore. So when we talk about “personal following” we talk about that which needs definition. Who is the person? Is he the father of a multitude, the prince of nationalities? Is he fruitful of thought, having ideas on which ages may feed? So we say “Take him for all in all,” or, to use a commoner form of expression, “Looking at him all round.” But in many cases there is no “all for all” to take: there is no “all round” to survey. In such instances, we cannot talk about persons and personalities and individual followings, for following there will be little or none. It is the man who is himself a Multitude that takes the nations with him. Moses, therefore, is not to be noted in the census of the wilderness as one but as a whole nation.

So far the children of Israel were right: they complained against the right man—if it were proper to complain against him at all. What we need is the complete view, the all-including view,—the Apostolic view, lifted up to which the greatest man born of woman has said, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” We sometimes miss the sublime boldness of that speech by omitting to reflect that the man who spoke it had a mind that could stretch itself by sacred imagination and tender sympathy over all the things of which the Divine economy is compounded. God is the real object of murmuring. Moses put this point very clearly:—“Your murmurings are not against us,

but against the Lord." The people did not mean that, perhaps; but we cannot be measured by our own reckoning when we come into the sphere religious and moral. We are always doing things we do not mean to do, and sometimes we do things of which we are wholly ignorant; and when we are sharply reminded of what the real meaning of our action is, we stand back in affront and express the language of surprise, and assume an attitude of unbelief. But we need the great teachers of the Bible, the men of penetration of every age, to show us what an action is. The man of science tells us that when we lift a hand we send a motion to the stars. Having heard that statement we account it grand, because it is the statement of one of the exact sciences. When another man of science says that every breath you draw affects the general level of the Atlantic, we say, "How amazing are the discoveries of science!" When the moral seer tells us that our whining is not against man but against God, we call him a "fanatic"! The ways of man are not equal. He who is amazed, because he is given to understand that the lifting of his hand sends a shudder to the stars, listens with unbelief to the statement that a lie grieves the Spirit of God,—a sin of any name wounds the peace of Heaven.

God knows how far he himself is responsible for our circumstances, and up to that degree he is faithful. He will find a solution of all difficulties how tangled and obstinate soever. This is a case in point:—The people had not taken themselves into the wilderness: God had taken them there, and he will see them out of it. So we say about honourable men when they undertake to lead us, and certain circumstances transpire which are of the nature of difficulty and hindrance. They say, in the spirit of honour,—“We are accountable for this; our strength is yours until this battle is fought; you did not bring yourselves in here, and out of it we will see you, health permitting, life being spared.” So the Lord will not leave us in wildernesses into which he himself has brought us. If we ourselves have gone into the desert without his permission or consent, we may be allowed to die there, and to remain without a grave in the sand in which we vainly thought to find a heaven: but if we have obeyed the Divine voice, and gone in the providential way, whatever there is on the road—*Marah*, or place of sand, or great river, or

greater sea—God will find a way through all. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

See how wonderfully God asserts law in the very midst of the most compassionate mercy :—I will give you bread in the wilderness, but on the sixth day you shall gather a double quantity; the Sabbath must be kept. How marvellous are the compassions of God ! and how marvellous the law of God ! We are not given over to wantonness and licence, gathering just as much as we please and every day of the week. God will have his time respected. If you gather more than he wants you to gather, it will rot,—it will offend your nostrils by its pestilent odour, and you will be glad to get rid of it. If you go out on the Sunday to see if you cannot do something that you did on Saturday, God will attend to the penal side of the act; you are building a house of smoke, and you can never live to enjoy it. Life is law—mercy; work-day—rest-day; labour—prayer; on the earth—in heaven. Blessed is the man whose life is thus balanced.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.” A noble prayer ! Made for every age, capable of being uttered by every tongue. “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” So there is an evangelical use of the ancient incident. Thus old history is turned into new uses, and all the days of the past are regarded as parables which have been teaching some higher truth than was at first observed within the corners of the narrow facts.

God is repeating this manna miracle every day. All food comes from above. You mistake, if you think you find your food ~~other~~where than from heaven. No sky, then no wheat; no cloud

overhead, then no garden round about; no firmanent, then no earth; no rain, no beauty; no fragrance of flowers, no summer feast. What are we eating? On what is our life being supported? We ought to ascertain this, and be very clear and distinct about it. At what table are we sitting? a table of our own spreading, or of God's? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." These are the invitations that make the Bible the most hospitable of all books. The Bible will have us eat and drink abundantly at God's banquet board. What is our reply? Shall we eat bread for the body and have no sustenance for the mind? Shall we feed the flesh and starve the soul? Are we—men of boasted wisdom and education—the men to strengthen the bones and make as iron the sinews, and attend to all the wants of the flesh, and to let the soul, the spirit, the inner guest die for want of light and air, and nutriment? Count him a murderer who kills his soul.

### Exodus xvi. 3.

"Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

### MOSES IN THE WILDERNESS OF SIN.

PEOPLE may be strong and hopeful at the beginning of a project, and most effusively and devoutly thankful at its close, but the difficulty is to go manfully through the *process*. Israel was in the desert, and never were spoiled children more peevish, suspicious, and altogether ill-behaved. If they could have stepped out of Egypt into Canaan at once, probably they would have been as pious as most of us; but there was the weary interval, the inhospitable wilderness! It is so in our life. Accept it as a solemn and instructive fact that life is a *process*. It is more than a beginning and an ending: more than a cradle and a grave. The *child* may be good, and the *old man* may be tranquil, but what of the petulant, self-willed, and prayerless *being* between these extremes?

The history leads us to dwell on *Processes*. See how far the historical teaching represents our own experience.

First. *Processes try men's temper*. See how the temper of Israel was tried in the wilderness! No bread, no water, no rest! How do processes try men's temper? (1) They are often *tedious*; (2) they are often *uncontrollable*; (3) they often seem to be made worse by the *incompetency of others*.

We must not drive life. Nature is not to be whipped and spurred by impatient riders. God's administration is calm. The wheels of his chariot are not bespattered by the mud of blustering and reckless haste. On the other hand, we are not to find in this reflection an excuse for the indolence and incapacity of *men*. There are stones which we can roll away. There are turbid little

streams which we can bridge. There are gates which weaker men than Samson can carry away. There is the profoundest difference between the indolence of men and the eternal calm of God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "I must work while it is called day."

Second. *The trials of processes are to be met not all at once, but a day at a time.* "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." See the law by which the manna was given. There was not a large store sent down. Daily hunger was met by daily bread. We are not allowed to live two days at once. In the parable the pendulum was told that it had to give but one tick at a time. The heart beats in the same way. Upon how little sleep it lives!

This daily display of Divine care teaches (1) that *physical* as well as spiritual gifts are God's; (2) that one of God's gifts is the *pledge of another*. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Why am I to be easy about *to-morrow*? Because God is good *to-day*! "He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Third. *Processes show the different dispositions of men.* Not their tempers only, but the deeper realities and aspects of their character. They were told not to leave any of the manna until the morning of the following day, but some of them *did* leave it. You cannot convince some men, nor can you bind them by authority, nor can you bring them under a common discipline. No. Provision must be made for madmen. Every society out of heaven is probably disturbed by some kind of eccentricity. Though the people were told in the distinctest manner that there would be no manna on the seventh day, yet they went out to gather it just as if they had never been warned! Such men are the vexation of the world. They plague every community of which they are a portion. You tell them that tickets cannot be had after a certain day, but they give you the lie, as far as they can, by coming for them two days after. There are such wise men everywhere, but happily they are now and then effectually checked and humbled. What a humiliation awaits them in the long run!

The history, at this point, urges the most direct application of

its truths upon our spiritual nature. (1) We have the *means of life* at our disposal : the manna lies at our tent-door ! (2) We are distinctly assured that such means are given *under law* : there is ■ *set time* for the duration of the opportunity : the night cometh !

Some men will set themselves against God in these matters. They will persistently work contrariwise. They will defy the law : they will challenge the sword : they will tell you that the night has no darkness for them, and that when God has shut the door the key of their importunity will open it ! Beware of such men. They will fail you at last ; and when you smite them with your reproaches, you can add no pain to the torment of their damnation.

Fourth. *All the processes of life should be hallowed by religious exercises.* There was a Sabbath even in the wilderness. The Sabbath is amongst the very oldest institutions. God rested on the seventh day, and blessed it. Before the law was given from Sinai God gave the Sabbath to Israel. Man *must* have rest, and all true rest is associated with religious ideas and aspirations. The animal rest is but typical : the *soul* must have its hours of quietness ; the spirit must pause in the presence of God to recover its strength.

(1) The Sabbath is more than a mere *law* ; it is an expression of *mercy*. (2) No man *ever loses anything* by keeping the Sabbath : "The Lord giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days." (3) *He* is the *loser* who has no day of rest.

Fifth. *Processes should leave some tender and hope-inspiring memories behind them.* "Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations ; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt." The way to enrich life is to keep a retentive memory in the heart. Look over a period of twenty years, and see the all-covering and ever-shining mercy of God ! How many special providences have you observed ? How many narrow escapes have you experienced ? How many difficulties have you surmounted ? How often have you found a pool in unexpected places ? We should lay up some memory of the Divine triumphs which have gladdened our lives, and fall back upon it for inspiration and courage in the dark and cloudy day. Go into your yesterdays to find God ! Search for him in the paths along

which you have come, and if you dare, under the teaching of your own memories, deny his goodness, then betake yourselves to the infamous luxury of distrust and reproach!

Sixth. *The process will end.* Though the wheels move slowly, yet will they reach the goal! You are not the men you were twenty years ago! The most of the desert-road is now *behind* some of you. Your future on earth is narrowing itself to a point. How is it with your souls? Your *feet* are sore with the long journey; are your *wings* ready for flight into the kingdom of the crystal river and the unsetting sun?

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### NOTE ON MANNA.

"It may have been derived from the *manna rains* known in various countries. There is an edible lichen which sometimes falls in showers several inches deep, the wind having blown it from the spots where it grew, and carried it onwards. In 1824 and in 1828, it fell in Persia and Asiatic Turkey in great quantities. In 1829, during the war between Persia and Russia, there was a great famine at Oroomiah, south-west of the Caspian Sea. One day, during a violent wind, the surface of the country was covered with what the people called 'bread from heaven,' which fell in thick showers. Sheep fed on it greedily, and the people who had never seen it before, induced by this, gathered it, and having reduced it to flour, made bread of it, which they found palatable and nourishing. In some places it lay on the ground five or six inches deep. In the spring of 1841, an amazing quantity of this substance fell in the same region, covering the ground, here and there, to the depth of from three to four inches. Many of the particles were as large as hail-stones. It was grey, and sweet to the taste, and made excellent bread. In 1846, a great manna rain, which occurred at Jenischehr, during a famine, attracted great notice. It lasted several days, and pieces as large as a hazel-nut fell in quantities. When ground and baked it made as good bread, in the opinion of the people, as that from grain. In 1846 another rain of manna occurred in the government of Wilna, and formed a layer upon the ground, three or four inches deep. It was of a greyish-white colour, rather hard, irregular in form, without smell, and insipid. Pallas, the Russian naturalist, observed it on the arid mountains and limestone tracts of the Great Desert of Tartary. In 1828, Parroth brought some from Mount Ararat, and it proved to be a lichen known as *Parmelia Esculenta*, which grows on chalky and stony soil, like that of the Kirghese Steppes of Central Asia. Eversmann described several kinds of it, last century, as found east of the Caspian, and widely spread over Persia and Middle Asia. It is round, and at times as large as a walnut, varying from that to the size of a pin's head, and does not fix itself in the soil in which it grows, but lies free and loose, drinking in nourishment from the surface, and easily carried off by the wind, which sweeps it away in vast quantities in the storms of spring, and thus causes the 'manna rains' in the districts over which the wind travels."

—Geikie's "Hours with the Bible."

## Exodus xvii.

1. And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim : and there was no water for the people to drink.

2. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me ? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord ?

3. And the people thirsted there for water ; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst ?

4. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people ? they be almost ready to stone me (tumultuary, not legal stoning).

5. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel ; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

6. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb (some particular rock in the Horeb range) ; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

7. And he called the name of the place Massah (trial or temptation), and Meribah (chiding or quarrel), because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not ?

8. Then came Amalek (the first formal mention as a nation), and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

9. And Moses said unto Joshua (the first mention of Joshua, the tenth in descent from Joseph, probably forty-five years old), Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek : to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

10. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek ; and Moses (upwards of eighty), Aaron (eighty-three), and Hur (the grandfather of Bezaleel, and not much younger than Moses or Aaron) went up to the top of the hill.

11. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed : and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12. But Moses' hands were heavy ; and they took a stone (only an eye-witness would have noted this), and put it under him, and he sat thereon and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

13. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

14. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven (done finally and completely in the reign of Hezekiah, see 1 Chron. iv. 43).

15. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi (Jehovah, my banner).

16. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation (because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of God, therefore the Lord hath war with Amalek from generation to generation).

### REPHIDIM: ANCIENT AND MODERN.

CHAPTERS like this enable us to see how far the race has advanced in a moral direction. How far have we travelled from Rephidim? This is more than a question in geography: it is a profound inquiry in morals. We are too apt to dismiss as ancient history terms which we consider to be merely local. The terms themselves may be strictly local and hardly worth remembering; but they may be associated with qualities, influences and ministries, which constitute an eternal presence in human life. The New Testament did not hesitate to make use of the history of the Old, and we are called upon in this matter to follow the example of Christ and to imitate that of the Apostles. They told us the meaning of the things which happened aforetime; and every teacher who would maintain a profound influence upon any age must see to it that he does not allow the unity of the ages to be broken, but rather insist upon their continuousness, their solidarity, and their unanimous meaning. The ages are one. If we ask how far have we advanced in a mechanical direction, it will be difficult to establish any link of union between our country to-day and five hundred years ago. Verily, we have travelled from ourselves innumerable thousands of miles in all matters of a merely mechanical nature. Our ancestors would not know us in these particulars. All things have been created anew. It would be impossible for us to go back upon the olden days. We should scorn their narrowness, wonder at their poverty, and hold in more or less gracious contempt the slowness, and the weariness, and the dull monotony of the old times of our forefathers. We rejoice in this progress; we mark it in a way

that cannot be easily mistaken, and say that civilisation has expanded its influence and consolidated its empire. So be it. How far have we advanced in a literary direction? Again the progress has been almost immeasurable. In words, in pureness of literature, in daring boldness of conception, in loftiness of speculation, in splendour and vividness of diction and representation, we seem to have advanced almost incalculably from many of the old standards. So be it. In this respect there is in very deed what may be termed ancient history. We have almost a new English. We have been so complete in our criticism and progress as to have almost established a new alphabet of things. We rejoice in this, and call it progress, and boast of it with honest and legitimate triumph. But the preacher's question is: How far have we advanced *morally*, spiritually, and in all the higher ranges and Diviner outlooks of our being? Here we seem to be still at Rephidim. Geographers say they cannot find out the exact locality. Verily, there need be no difficulty about the exact locality—it is just where we are. We carry the locality with us. Let men who like to search the sand, and turn over the stones, and compare ancient and modern geography, bewilder themselves in seeking for square feet and precise positions; we interpret the event by a broader law, and have no difficulty whatever in affirming that we carry Rephidim with us, and this day, four—five thousand years away in time from the place, we are standing in the very foot-prints of old Israel, and doing in all their broader meanings exactly the actions which old Israel performed. Unless we seize this idea of the Scriptures we shall separate ourselves very far indeed from their truest and deepest meanings. We must not allow little boundaries, and local names, and occult Hebraisms and Chaldaisms to come between us and the great unity of the human race. We must overleap these, or crush our way through them, and claim association with the central and abiding line which marks the development of human history and Divine purpose.

Why be so emphatic about our being at Rephidim? Because, first of all, I said that the people at Rephidim were tormented by a continual consciousness of necessity. How far have we got from necessity? Not one inch. Necessity has followed us all the time. It is awake in the morning before we open our eyes, and

the last thing we see, before we close our vision in sleep, is the grim image of necessity. The people wanted bread a day or two ago—now they are consumed with thirst, and are chiding Moses and murmuring bitterly against him because of the want of water. If that is so, verily we are still at Rephidim. Every life knows the bite of necessity; every man represents the great void of need; every soul cries out in pain because there is wanting some completing favour, some culminating and all-contenting benediction. Here it is bread; there it is water; but everywhere a famine—a hungrier famine than the wolf's cry for food in many a case,—a famine of the soul, a spiritual destitution, a consciousness of a void which time cannot satisfy or space content. Why did they not find themselves water? Why did they not supply their own necessity? This is the mystery of human life: that we are not self-complete, but are debtors to nature. We must put out our hand and receive from another that which we daily need. Poor creatures!—yet so august in greatness. We are indebted to one another. We find a leader when we are in pain, sorrow and deep necessity. In the great round of daily occurrences we pay but small heed to him—he is there, or will soon be present, or where he is we hardly know and do not specially care; but let us become surrounded by danger, let us become conscious of some new necessity, let a sudden pain strike our life and torment our happiness, and up goes the cry, Where is Moses? Where is the leader? Where the priest who can pray? Where the man who is a host in himself? These are the hours in which we discover just what we are and just what we can do. Strange that men who cannot support the body without help have in some infatuated cases supposed that they could nurture the soul without assistance. God will have hold of us somewhere. If we do not give him the opportunity of laying hold of our consenting minds, and burning, loyal, devoutest love, he will get hold of our fleshly necessities, and we shall cry to him, whom we spiritually deny, when our tongue is athirst for water and our life is perishing for want of bread. Pray we must—a prayer of agony and hopefulness. Prayer in its deepest meaning—not in its formality, or as a matter of attitude, and posture, and mechanical expression—is a necessity of life, an instinct of the soul, and an aspiration that separates us from the base and makes us men.

We must advance from the lower to the higher. We have it before us as a certain and indisputable fact that for the support of the body we need external help : we need the whole ministry of kind and gracious nature. What wonder if in the education, and culture, and strengthening of the soul we need all heaven, with its infinite Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ? Were we pressed to affirm that necessity it would be in strict consonance with all the other wants that follow and devour our wasting life.

Why be so emphatic about our still being at Rephidim ? Because at Rephidim help was found in unexpected places and given in unexpected ways : "Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." Is that ancient history ? It may be ancient, but it is very new—quite modern, young as the morning, present as our immediate consciousness and experience. We are always helped by unexpected people, in unexpected ways, and at unexpected places. God would appear to delight in baffling the ingenuity that would forecast the future with too exclusive a minuteness. God will not allow us to trifle with his prerogatives. He will find water where we should find none. The rock is not an inhospitable stone ; it is a congealed fountain. Human necessity and Divine grace meet in sweet consent. Have no fear then. I know that there is a rock immediately ahead of me ; but God can melt it into a river. I know that there is a Red Sea just in front of me ; but God can divide it and let me pass as through an iron gate. I am aware that Jordan's water is rolling just a few paces ahead, and I may have to go so near it as to touch it ; but the moment the foot of faith splashes in the waters of danger they must give way, for faith can never fail. Lord, increase our faith.

In the great encounters of life, either the spiritual or the material must give way, and God has never been stopped by that which is material and physical. Say that it is a work of imagination if you please, but as such it is done with infinite skill—a skill so infinite as to be more than human. God is never represented as being worsted, baffled, by any of the material which is built up into the house which we call his universe. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall

remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." We die when our faith dies. Our power is not a power of genius, but an almightiness of belief. Nature is always equal to our physical necessities. God has put everything into nature which that other nature, called human, requires for its bodily sustentation. All food is in the kind earth. All medicine is in the garden. All healing is in the air which is blowing around us like a Divine benediction. The water is sometimes kept in the rock, and the bread is sometimes locked up in the cloud and allowed to drop down upon us like a very small coriander seed which we gather with wonder, and eat with an inquiry, saying, What is it? All help is near, if you did but understand it:—"there standeth One among you, whom ye know not; he it is." The unknown is sitting next to you. The tree you need for the cure of the bitter pool is bending over the very water that needs to be healed. We realise the nearness of food, the nearness of music, the nearness of the living air, the nearness of those elements which are essential to the upbuilding and maturity of our lower nature,—why do we not realise the nearness of the redeeming God—the immediate presence of him who says—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in"? In all other things we glory in the nearness of the remedy, in the close proximity of what we need: yet, when we come into spiritual inquiries, the soul says—"Why standest thou afar off, O God?" and the inquiry is rebuked by the infinitely tender gospel—"I am a God near at hand," saith the Lord, "and not a God afar off." A wonderful rock!—I cannot explain it; but rocks and more than rocks; rivers and more than water—the Lord hath turned every Nile into saving blood, every rock into living water, and he has interpreted the parable of nature into the great and saving gospel of love. Do you ask the meaning of the rock? The Apostle Paul shall give it:—"I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Be it mine to belong to the school that sees great things in little ones, that sees

the moulding hand of God in the dew-drop as well as in the infinite constellations which seem to crowd the very amplitude of infinity. The very hairs of your head are all numbered; and as for so-called small things, take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; it were better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he should dispossess or offend one of God's little ones. Look for great meanings. See in the dust the possibility of children being raised up unto Abraham. See in the temple stones possible voices of praise, if the natural worshippers should suddenly become dumb; and see in every rock not stone only, but an unhewn stairway up to the Jerusalem which is lighted by the Lamb.

"Rock of Ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee."

Why be so emphatic about still being at Rephidim? Because peevish tempers were corrected by great duties in that ancient locality. So the providence of God continues to work in us. The children of Israel were peevishly sighing and crying for the old Egyptian life, longing for the fleshpots of Egypt, desiring to be back again where they had food enough, because even Egyptian slave-drivers were wise enough not to starve their beasts of burden. So Israel fell into fretfulness, and whining, and dissatisfaction, and rebellion. What did God do? He sent Amalek upon Israel. That is the function of war among the nations. It is no use reasoning with peevishness. It is time wasted to try to expostulate with any man who is in a whining mood of soul, displeased because of his bread, discontented because of the scarcity of water, making no allowance for the undulations of life,—reasoning, remonstrance, expostulation would be lost. What must be done? An enemy must be raised up to smite him with the sword. Then he will come into a new mood of mind, forget his littleness, and, springing forward to a realisation of his true power, he will lose in service the discontent which he contracted in unbelief.

What we want to-day is persecution. We do not want eloquence, criticism,—new learning, some new invention in theological confectionery that shall tempt appetites that have been

sated ; we want war—persecution—the enemy at the gate. Then we should begin to forgive one another, to pray for one another, to come more closely together at the altar and more near in that consent of soul which is blessed with insight into spiritual mysteries. We have lost in losing the enemy. The sting of Smithfield fire would correct our theology a good deal ; the old gibbet would take the fretfulness out of our tone ; the great earthquake rocking our cities would make us forget our animosities and unite us in bolder intercession. This is the meaning of your commercial depressions, of your mercantile losses, of your great and small afflictions in the family. This is the meaning of the little coffin in the upper chamber, of the father's dead body being carried out to the churchyard. This the meaning of all the gloom, and cloud, and battle, and contest. We have been too peevish, wandering, discontented. We have been in need of knowing the true tragedy of life and of being whipped out of our peddling criticism, out of our mean and contemptible conceptions of God and his universe ; and if we accept the Divine discipline in the right spirit, when that discipline has exhausted itself, each man will say for himself, "It was good for me that I was afflicted ; before I was afflicted I went astray." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." When God sends the Amalekite upon you, it is that the enemy may teach what the friend has failed to convey.

A most beautiful picture :—the old men up the hill praying, Moses, and Aaron, and Hur—a man almost as mysterious in history as Melchisedek himself,—all the three men more than eighty years of age, away supplicating Heaven ; the young men fighting as young men always should be, and the Lord watching. Now the Amalekite prevails—now Israel. How goes the fight ? Watch the leader's arms. They are up ; then the banner is Israel's that floats with triumph in the hot air ;—the poor arms have fallen down, and Amalek springs towards the temporary victory. It is a great parable ; it is a most tender idyl. This

scene is full of present mystery and present grace. Mock the suppliants if you will ; but they are men who are engaged in the upper regions of the battle. They are not cowards who have fled from the fight, they are heroes who are standing at its front and have undertaken the responsibility of its success. Young men, go forth to the war. I am ashamed of the young man who stays at home and sates himself with debasing luxury, when there are great wars to be fought, great positions to be taken, mighty fortresses of evil to be overthrown. Awake ! awake ! put on thy strength, oh redeemed life, and carry the Lord's banner away to the front and set it up in sign of victory.

Wondrous is one little line in the history :—"And thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go," and afterward Moses, having spoken to Joshua, said, "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." Never forget the old rod, the old book, the old truth ;—the sword that cut off the head of Goliath—"Give me that," said David, "there is none like it." Thus God hides inspiration in things of apparently little value, and touches the imagination and the faith by books, ministries, churches, altars, which we thought had passed away into desuetude, perhaps oblivion. Your first prayer may help you to-day. The faith of your youth may be the only thing to win the battle which now challenges your strength. One little hour with the old, old book may be all you need to obtain the sufficiency of light which will drive away the cloud of mystery and bring in the heaven of explanation. Of ancient Rephidim we know nothing : the geographers and discoverers are still searching for it ; but the modern Rephidim of conscious necessity, of finding help in unexpected places, of having peevish tempers corrected by great duties,—that Rephidim is our present environment. May we answer the call of God when challenged to battle with a heroism that cannot cringe and with a faith that can only satisfy itself with prayer.

## Exodus xviii.

1. When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law (his relation by marriage, a term of very wide application), heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt (the supreme fact) ;

2. Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back (after her dismissal by Moses),

3. And her two sons ; of which the name of the one was Gershom ; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land :

4. And the name of the other was Eliezer ; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh :

5. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God (used in a broad sense of the whole mountain region) :

6. And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

7. And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance (Oriental etiquette, not implying the superiority of Jethro), and kissed him (common form of salutation in the East) ; and they asked each other of their welfare (said to each other, Peace be with you) ; and they came into the tent.

8. And Moses told his father in law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them.

9. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

11. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods : for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

12. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God : and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God (and thus acknowledged his priesthood, as Abraham had acknowledged the priesthood of Melchisedek).

13. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people (ability to judge was thought to indicate fitness for kingship) : and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

14. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people ? why sittest thou

thyself alone (this word is emphatic), and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even ?

15. And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God :

16. When they have a matter, they come unto me ; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

17. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.

18. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee : for this thing is too heavy for thee ; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

19. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee (May God be with thee, a prayer rather than a promise) : Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God (do the highest work) :

20. And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

21. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men (Jethro himself had his subordinates), such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness (a comprehensive description of "able men") ; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (organisation on the decimal system) :

22. And let them judge the people at all seasons : and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge : so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

23. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

24. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

25. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

26. And they judged the people at all seasons : the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27. And Moses let his father in law depart ; and he went his way into his own land.

### JETHRO'S COUNSEL TO MOSES.

THE work which Moses attempted in his own strength strongly indicated the character of the man. He undertook to settle the dispute between the Egyptian and the Hebrew, and he did settle it by the destruction of the former. He interposed between the Hebrews who were striving one with another, and would have determined the contest without consultation with

any man. He asked no help when he saw the shepherds ill-treating the daughters of Jethro ; he took counsel with himself alone, and delivered the maidens from their oppressors. In the case before us we see precisely the same characteristics : Moses was the sovereign of Israel, and as such administered all matters, great and small. He did not foresee the results of the service in which he was so laboriously engaged. It was an older head than his own that saw the consequences of toil so uninterrupted and exhausting. For the time being Moses was borne up by the excitement of the situation, or by his love of the work ; but Jethro foresaw that an increase of this kind of exacting labour would wear out the strongest and boldest man in all the hosts of Israel. The worker does not always see the bearing or the issues of the ministry in which he is engaged. Excitement suspends the judicial faculty. The warrior in the midst of the battle is not in a position to judge so completely and certainly as the spectator who observes the scene from a distance. It ought to be the part of a wise and generous friendship to point out to men when they are working too much, and wasting in exaggeration energies which might be beneficently exercised through a longer period of time. Some men live intensely,—their lives are short, but the measure of their service is complete ; they do not pause, they have no Sabbath days : with an unwise prodigality they expend their whole force within a brief hour. Such men are not always just to society. A rich man has no right to give so profusely as to cut off the occasion of liberality in others. The strong man ought not to be at liberty to do so much work with his own hands as to render the labour of others unnecessary.

It was upon this principle that Jethro proceeded in the case of Moses. The great leader of Israel, though leading a life of laborious self-sacrifice, was actually falling below the requirements of social justice. He seemed to be acting on the conviction that he only could manage, arrange, and otherwise successfully administer all the affairs of the people. It never occurred to him that he was allowing the talent of others to lie idle. Talent requires to be evoked. It is true indeed that genius asserts itself, and clears for itself space and prominence equal to its measure of supremacy ; on the other hand, it is equally true that much sound ability may become dormant, simply because the

leaders of society do not call it into responsible exercise. The counsel which Moses received from Jethro inspired Israel with new life. From the moment that it was acted upon, talent rose to the occasion : energy was accounted of some value, and men who had probably been sulking in the background came to be recognised and honoured as wise statesmen and cordial allies. There is more talent in society than we suspect. It needs the sunshine of wise encouragement in order to develop it. There is a lesson in this suggestion for all who lead the lives of men. Specially, perhaps, there is a lesson to pastors of churches. It is a poor church in which there is not more talent than has yet been developed. When Saul saw any strong man and any valiant man, he took him to himself. This is the law of sure progress and massive consolidation in church life. Let us keep our eyes open for men of capacity and good-will, and the more we watch the more shall our vigilance be rewarded. We should try men by imposing responsibilities upon them. There is range enough in church organisation for the trial and strengthening of every gift. Better be a door-keeper in the house of God than a sluggard, and infinitely better sweep the church floor than lounge upon the pew-top, and find fault with the sweeping of other people. Every man in the Church ought to be doing something. If the pattern be taken from the case described in the context, there need be no fear of rivalry or tumult. The arrangement indicated by Jethro was based upon the severest discipline. The position of Moses was supreme and undisputed ; every great case was to be referred to his well-tried judgment, and in all cases of contention his voice was to determine the counsels of the camp. There must be a ruling mind in the Church, and all impertinence and other self-exaggeration must be content to bow submissively to the master-will. Very possibly there may be danger in sudden development of mental activity and social influence ; but it must be remembered, on the other hand, that there is infinitely deadlier peril in allowing spiritual energy and emotion to fall into disuse. In the former case we may have momentary impertinence, conceit, and coxcombry ; but in the latter we shall have paralysis and distortion more revolting than death itself.

Jethro counselled Moses "to be for the people God-ward, that he might bring the causes unto God." The highest of all vocations

is the spiritual. It is greater to pray than to rule. Moses was to set himself at the highest end of the individual, political, and religious life of Israel, and to occupy the position of intercessor. He was to be the living link between the people and their God. Is not this the proper calling of the preacher? He is not to be a mere politician in the Church, he is not to enter into the detail of organisation with the scrupulous care of a conscientious hireling: he is deeply and lovingly to study the truth as it is in Jesus, that he may be prepared to enrich the minds and stimulate the graces of those who hear him. He is to live so closely with God, that his voice shall be to them as the voice of no other man, a voice from the better world, calling the heart to worship, to trust, and to hope, and through the medium of devotion to prepare men for all the engagements of common life. The preacher is to live apart from the people, in order that he may in spiritual sympathy live the more truly with them. He is not to stand afar off as an unsympathetic priest, but to live in the secret places of the Most High, that he may from time to time most correctly repronounce the will of God to all who wait upon his ministry. When preachers live thus, the pulpit will reclaim its ancient power, and fill all rivalry with confusion and shame. Let the people themselves manage all subordinate affairs; call up all the business talent that is in the Church, and honour all its successful and well-meant experiments; give every man to feel that he has an obligation to answer. When you have done this, go yourself, O man of God, to the temple of the Living One, and acquaint yourself deeply with the wisdom and grace of God, that you may be as an angel from heaven when you come to speak the word of life to men who are worn by the anxieties and weakened by the temptations of a cruel world.

Many a man inquires, half in petulance and half in self-justification, "What more can I possibly do than I am already doing?" Let the case of Moses be the answer. The question in his case was not whether he was doing enough, but whether he was not doing too much in one special direction. Some of the talent that is given to business might be more profitably given to devotion. Rule less, and pray more. Spare time from the business meeting that you may have leisure for communion with God. Some persons apparently suppose that time is lost which is not spent

in the excitement of social activity. Understand that silence may be better than speech, that prayer is the best preparation for service; and that the duties of magistracy may well be displaced by the higher duties of spiritual devotion. Moses was, undoubtedly, to all human appearance, a much busier man when he did all the business of Israel himself than when he called lieutenants to his assistance; but what was subtracted from his activity was added to the wealth of his heart, and though he made less noise, he exerted a wider influence. Is there not a lesson for the people in the position which Moses occupied at the suggestion of Jethro? Is it nothing to society to have intercessors? Is it nothing that the chief minds of the age should be engaged in the study of truth for the benefit of others? It ought to be the supreme joy of our social life that there are men of capacity, of earnestness, and of high spiritual penetration and sympathy, who devote their whole energy to the stimulus and culture of our best powers. The ministry of any country should be the fountain of its power. Ministers are to study the character of God, to acquaint themselves with all the secrets of truth, and to comprehend as far as possible the necessity and desire of the human heart, and the result of their endeavours will express itself in a luminous and tender ministry. This is work enough for any man. He who is faithful to this vocation will find that he has no energy to spare for the trifles of a moment, or even for the subordinate questions of serious public life. The time which a minister spends in secrecy may enable him most successfully to teach the deep things of God. It is not enough that he be prepared with matter, he must have time and opportunity to enter into the *spirit* of his work. His knowledge may be wide and correct, but whatever is wanting in the reality and sensitiveness of his sympathy will be so much subtracted from his spiritual wisdom and strength.

## Exodus xix. 1-13.

1. In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai (about eighteen miles).

2. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3. And Moses went up unto God (ascended Sinai), and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain (while he was yet a great way off), saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

4. Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings ("As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them upon her wings"), and brought you unto myself (out of Egypt and its corrupting influences).

5. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure (some valuable possession which the owner has got by his own exertions) unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7. And Moses came and called for the elders (the usual channel of communication) of the people, and laid before their faces (a curious piece of literalism) all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned (reported) the words of the people unto the Lord.

9. And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud (in the denseness of a cloud) that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

10. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them (an outward purification symbolic of inward fitness) to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes (the Levitical law requires the washing of clothes on many occasions),

11. And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

13. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

### THE RESULTS OF OBEDIENCE.

ISRAEL having gone from Rephidim, came to the desert of Sinai, and there Moses, having gone up the mountain, received from God a distinct message, "If ye will obey my voice, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me." This is a tabernacle without form; this is a sanctuary not made with hands. If we can seize the meaning of this passage we shall have in our hands one of the key-paragraphs of the whole history. Let us try to classify the thoughts which grow as in a garden planted by the Lord himself; a garden whose hedges are far away; for he whose mercy endureth for ever makes no small gardens; he would, indeed, have no desert land.

Here is a Gospel originating in heaven. Moses is not the leading speaker. No desire has been expressed by the people that any such arrangement as this should be completed. The movement is always from above. The rains that water the earth, that make it bring forth and bud, are clouds far above our heads and far beyond our influence. The great thoughts all come down tipped with a light above the brightness of the sun. If any man lack wisdom he is to ask of God. It is not a plant that is grown in the clay; it is a flower that blossoms and blooms in the eternal paradise. Keep this steadily in mind in the perusal of the sacred record, that no great thought ever came from the human side. Man has had but to reply; the infinite appeals of judgment and of grace have come out of the hidden heavens. We are, therefore, debtors to grace. We have nothing that is worth having that is of our own invention or manufacture. All eternal thought and all eternal feeling, being wise, pure, and beneficent, can be traced to him who giveth all good and perfectness. This is the foundation thought.

Now comes a Divine method which attests the heavenliness of its origin, having about it all the mystery of the infinite and unspeakable. God says: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant." Can he not make them do so? There is no compulsion in worship, or in morals, or in true spiritual obedience. A child can turn his back upon God and treat the Almighty with sullenness. The tiniest knee can stiffen itself, and decline to bow

before the heavens. In its bodily relation, it can be crushed, broken, destroyed; but representing the mind, the heart, the will, God cannot bend that obstinate iron. So God begins by seeking consent. Man has to be a party to this marvellous covenant. If we sing, it is because our love is so burning that we cannot keep back the music; if we obey, it is because our hearts consent to the statute which demands obedience. Has God, then, given any detailed laws up to this time which he means the people to accept? No. Here is the wondrousness of the method, the laws—using that word in the plural number—have yet to come. Mark the Divine wisdom—the wondrous reach of the Divine thought. To have come with ten words, or a thousand lines of statute and precept would have excited argument and discontent, criticism, and possible rebellion. Not a word was said about the detail. God will not light the mountain until the sacrifice is prepared; the smoke, and the fire, and the trumpet will come by-and-by. What is first wanted? The spirit, not the act, of obedience. Everything turns upon that distinction. God asks broadly and comprehensively for obedience. He must have a spirit in tune with the music of his own purpose, and then, as to the separate melodies that must be played, they will fall into their right place, and will assume new relations and new value, because of the spirit of obedience which has been enkindled and sanctified in the human heart. That is the Divine philosophy—not to come with two tables of stone, and to invite detailed criticism and wordy controversy, but to face the creature, as it were, and to say, “Wilt thou obey thy Creator in very deed?” The creature answers gladly, “I will.” After that you may have as many tables of stone as the occasion requires, or as human development may call for in the ages of education yet to dawn upon an advancing race.

Mark the wondrousness of the Divine providence, and the Divine method: First, the spirit of obedience is created; then the separate words, or individual and singular laws, are uttered to a prepared heart. Probably it could be proved that a great deal of our conscious disobedience has arisen from our looking at the law we have to obey, rather than preparing the heart to obey the whole counsel of God. You have no right to look at the laws, until you have promised obedience, and pledged with an oath of

the heart that you will be true to the Divine proposals. Men first disqualify themselves for judgment, and then proceed to criticism; they say, "What are the Commandments?" That is not a permissible inquiry. We are not dealing with plurals and details, with daily discipline and momentary demands; we are dealing with the soul of things, with the spirit of man, with the mood and temper of the heart. Granted that all is right in this direction, then turn to the laws, and you will take them up as a very little thing, understanding the sweet music of him who came to "fulfil the law." "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,"—a most heavy yoke and a burden grievous beyond all other weight, if we come to it without a prepared spirit; but having filled the heart with preparedness, and filled the mouth with a song of adoration and a hymn of loyalty, then let the tables of stone come to us: the stones shall have no hardness, and the law shall no longer be arbitrary, but part of the happy music and sacred necessity which characterise the whole order and intent of God.

Here is the explanation of the Divine preferences which have distressed so many hearts under the cruel name of sovereignty and election. There need be no torture in using those words. If we feel distressed by them, it is because we have come upon them along the wrong path. They are beautiful and noble words when set in their places according to the Divine intent. "Then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Is that partiality in any exclusive sense? Not at all; it is really meant to be *inclusive*. God elects *humanity*. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom." In what sense? In the ordinary sense—namely, a great aggregate of subjects ruled by one arbitrary and despotic king? In no such sense. The literal meaning is, ye shall *all* be kings. Now you see the meaning of that great name, "King of kings"—not king of an individual monarch here and there, as in Britain, or Russia, or China, but of all believers. All obedient souls are lifted up unto kingdom. We are royal equals if we obey Heaven's will, and God is King of kings,—King of all. We are a royal generation. All this language is typical. Beautiful is the historical line when seized and wisely applied. Let us attempt such seizure and application. The firstborn were

chosen, and the firstborn were to be priests. In what sense are the firstborn chosen? Not as relegating the afterborn to positions subordinate and inferior; but in the sense of being their pledge and seal. God has the eldest son, and therefore—that is the sacred logic—he has all the other children. Then the laws regarding the priesthood underwent a change, and the family of Aaron was called. We proceed from an individual, namely, the firstborn, to a family, namely, the Aaronic stock. But why were they chosen? That all the children of Aaron might also be priests, in the truly spiritual and eternal sense, though not in official and formal name and status. Then the family was deposed and a tribe is chosen—the tribe of Levi. Mark how the history accumulates and grows up into a prophecy and an argument! First the individual, then the family, then the tribe, then the Son of man,—absorbing all the past, gathering up into its true and official meaning all priesthood, all intercession. There is one Advocate with the Father, the Man Christ Jesus.

A new light thus begins to dawn upon the cloud. There is nothing arbitrary in the movement of God when we can penetrate its infinite philosophy. Will God have the first-fruits of the harvest field? He claims all such. Why will he claim the first-fruits? That in having the first-fruits he might have all the field. He will not take the whole wheat acreage of the world into his heavens and devour our poor loaf of bread; but he will take the first ear of corn that we can find in all the fields, and, having taken that, he says: "In giving me this you have given me all." He is not to be charged with arbitrariness and severity because he takes one little ear of corn, or one poor little sheep, and says, "This is mine." He is to be charged with a nobler grace than our fancy had dreamed, for he takes a visit to the poor prisoner as a visit paid to himself, bread given to the poor as bread given to the Triune God. The lifting up of one sheaf of wheat and waving it before him is not the result of an arbitrary sovereignty, but is sign, symbol, and type that we have given him all—that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." The Lord said to the man whom he constituted the new head of the race: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Think of that noble inclusion when you speak of elective sovereignty and reprobating judgment.

This also throws light upon the vexed question of inspiration. We ask, "Why were some inspired?" You say Moses and David, Isaiah and Daniel, and John and Paul—they were inspired that we might all be inspired. They are the firstborn; they are the leaders and prototypes. Because Paul was inspired, it does not follow that the Holy Ghost is withheld from us. The Spirit is the abiding Comforter; he is the possession of the whole redeemed and regenerated Church. He will never leave us. Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost? Do not dwarf the mighty argument by asking shallow questions about the relative degrees of inspiration. We cannot discuss an inquiry which lies beyond the evidence at our command. Enough it is to know that the Holy Ghost is Christ's gift to the whole believing Church. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" So the whole idea of priestism is destroyed, and the whole conception of arbitrary and despotic sovereignty goes down, and must be branded as an unspeakable blasphemy. We are all kings and priests unto God and the Father; we are all royal, chosen, elect, precious. This conception alone fits the character of him who is symbolised by the firmament, and who gives good things to the unthankful and to the evil, as well as to the grateful and the good.

Here is God's conception of "an holy nation." A holy nation in the Divine view is an obedient nation, a nation living in the spirit of obedience. Let the spirit of obedience be right, and the letter of obedience will soon become right also. First must come the spirit, then the literal obedience. So in all things. Our Christian character in its integrity and massiveness is destroyed by our foolish attention in the wrong place to detailed precepts and instances. It is notably so in the matter of Christian liberality. There are but few who understand the philosophy of joyous consecration in this department. What is wanting? The total gift. If it were a question of detail as to whether this or that sum should be given, or the whole appeal be shirked, then a series of vexations would torment the conscience and the judgment. There is no such law. We give the all, and therefore it becomes quite easy to give the little particular. But until we have given the all we cannot give the other. It may be extorted from our

hands by a complaining conscience, but it is no acceptable oblation on the altar of the Church. It is notably so in the matter of time. How do we come to give one day in seven to Christ's worship? We do so, when we do it at all properly, because we have first given all the seven days. It is easy to give one in particular when we have consecrated the whole. The one day is the wheat-sheaf taken up from the harvest of time, and God says, receiving it, "You have given me all the days in giving me this, the queenliest of the seven." This is the meaning of still being under the law and not under grace, namely, that we are striving to do little things, and separate laws, and keep particular commandments with which we have no business, until the soul is adjusted by the meridian of the eternal sovereignty, and the whole spirit goes out only anxious to obey.

Read the commandments in the light of this explanation, and how easy they are. "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" The soul is amazed—as if the conception of having any other God could have dawned upon such glowing love. "*Honour thy father and thy mother.*" The spirit springs up, and says, "Nothing can be easier, more delightful, or in accord with my wish." "*Thou shalt not steal.*" The heart is, as it were, momentarily and subtly affronted—as if such a commandment could be needed, where the sacrifice of the body is so complete. Was the human obedience first pledged? So was the Divine promise. The way of the Lord is equal. Did he who asked for the obedience lay down the ground of his claim? He did, saying, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." First the history, then the obedience, then the promise, then the detailed law; and the detailed law coming after the promise becomes an easy burden, and a yoke so light as to be like a necklet of jewels.

## Exodus xix.-xx.

### THE COMMANDMENTS.

WE cannot get rid of Sinai in human education. If we persuade ourselves by some false reasoning that the things recorded in these chapters did not literally happen, we are playing the fool with ourselves. God could only come to us at the first by the letter. He touches us by infinite accommodations of his own nature and by a gracious study of our own. This is the plague of the imperfect reason, that it will quibble about the incident, the wrappage, and decoration of things. It seems to be unable to penetrate to inmost thoughts, essences, qualities, and meanings. Sinai is in every life. Let us part with as much as we can of the merely external, and still there remains the fact that in our lives are lightnings, and thunderings, and great trumpeting of power, as well as solemn claims and urgent appeals to every quality and force in our nature. Who has not been in stony places in the carrying out of his education,—great, black, inhospitable localities, well called *wildernesses*; wild and howling deserts; mountains of stone; embodiments of difficulty; types of arduous discipline and inexorable demand? Why play the fool? Why miss the wine of God's grace and wisdom by asking narrow or foolish questions about the vessel which contains it, when within the whole mystery of life there stands the barren mountain—the inhospitable sand stretches mile on mile on every hand and nothing speaks to us in all the terrific scene but law, claim, and obligation—the tremendous demand of an unyielding creditor, who has come to arrest and imprison us until the uttermost farthing be paid? Our spiritual experience makes the letter quite small. There are still those who are asking questions about the local Sinai, the narrow and comparatively trivial incident, and are missing all the poetry of the occasion, not hearing the Divine and solemn voice, and not an wering the

sublime demand for more perfect purification, completer refinement, and profounder obedience. Why not start our inquiries from the other side?—What is this voice of law? What is this standard of discipline which forces itself upon our moral attention? What is this claim that is pressed upon us by every variety of expression which follows us, now affrontingly, now pleading, according to the moral phase which we exhibit towards it? Did we begin our inquiry at that end, and so come along the line of revelation, Sinai, the local mountain, and the desert, and all trumpetings, thunderings, lightnings, tempests, all upheavals, and earthquakes, and terrible scenes, would fall into their right proportion and relation, and the one sovereign thought would be, —Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Instead of looking at the commandments one by one, and thus running the risk of missing their whole meaning, let us look at the commandments in their totality and call them One Commandment with many different phases, and aspects, and bearings upon human life.

What is the teaching of that great law pronounced from heaven? Is there any grace in it? Is there any touch of love? Is there any trembling of pathos? Is it all hard iron? Is it all tremendous exaction, pitiless, tyrannous claim? Have we always read the commandments aright? and have we been just to their innermost meaning when we have characterised them as hard? I think not. What do these commandments urge upon us?—*A right view of God.* That is the first injunction. We are called to right theology—not of a formal and technical, but of a moral and spiritual kind. The great movement of the heart must first of all be God-ward. We cannot work until the soul is brought into the right mood and proper quality by a full perception of the sovereignty and righteous claim and tender grace of God. We cannot break in upon the commandments where we please, and obey the law in parts and parcels. There is a temptation to think we can do so. We are sometimes tempted to think that we can keep the eighth commandment, but not the fifth; the fourth, but not the ninth; the tenth, but not the first, and so on. That is impossible. To keep one commandment is to keep all; to offend in one commandment is to break all. This may not seem to be so on the surface; but a complete

analysis of the occasion and circumstances will result in the finding that the commandments are one law, complete, indivisible, only set forth in points and aspects for the convenience of learners, and as an accommodation to the infirmity or incompleteness of children. First of all, then, we are called to a right view of God. We cannot move one step in a right direction until something like this view has been realised. Every succeeding commandment will be dumb to us, if we have not entered into the mystery of the first. What is God to us? What are his claims upon us? What is there in us that responds to his presence, and that, so to say, reveals him before he comes with any obvious manifestation of his personality upon us? Are we akin? Are we his children? Is there any sound in the ear or the heart which, being interpreted, means,—“In the beginning God made man in his own image and likeness”? That is our first study. We shall be mere moralists if we begin at the second commandment. That is so-called legalism and morality,—the pedantry which snaps off the commandments from the great central stem and treats them as separate particles, as isolated possibilities of virtue. We must come from the Divine point, from the spiritual communion of the soul with God, and then the commandments will come upon our souls as appeals to our power, and as sweet necessities, not as arbitrary impositions and tyrannies.

What next have we in this consolidated commandment? Having a right view of God, we have a right view, in the next place, of *labour*. God condescends to take notice of our working ways, of our allotments and appointments of a temporal kind. The voice of mercy is in this injunction regarding labour. In effect, God says to us, “You must not always toil; your heads must not be bent down in continual proneness to the earth; you may labour six days, but the seventh part of your time should be devoted to spiritual communion, to the culture of the upper and better nature, to the promotion of your higher and nobler education.” This is the gracious law; but, say, is this law without tears? Is this commandment without grace? Is there no mercy here? Is there not a subtle allusion to an earlier charter in which God made man to commune with himself? If you are doomed to seven days’ work, it is against God’s mind. If any

have to work seven days for the mouthful of bread they need, it is the doing of an enemy; it is not the claim of God. I ask you to praise him for this defence of feeble human nature and this plea for a higher human education. Do not fritter away the blessing by technical inquiry and pedantic analysis of meaning. The sublime, infinite purpose is this: that man is more than a labourer; he is a worshipper; he is a kinsman of God; he has belongings in the sky. A religion that thus comes to me and takes me away from my toil, and bids me rest awhile and think of the larger quantities, and the more ample time, and the heavenly kingdoms, is a religion I cannot afford to do without. It is a religion of grace; it is a religion which knows my necessities, pities my infirmities, spares my wasting strength. The Sabbath, in its spiritual aspect and meaning, is one of the strongest defences of the inspiration of the Bible and the Divinity of the religion which it reveals. It is man's day and God's day; more thoroughly man's day because completely God's day. It is their united time,—time of fellowship, hour of communion, opportunity for deeper reading, larger prayer, and Diviner consecration.

Having a right view of God and a right view of labour, we have also a right view of *physiology*. The Bible takes care of man's body. Thou shalt not waste it; thou shalt not poison it; thou shalt not degrade the inner nature by a prostitution of the outer constitution. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." A commandment which so speaks to us is associated with a religion that is no merely spiritual phantasy. This is a practical monitor. It enters every room, remains in the house night and day, tarries as a guest seven days a week, goes out with us to the marketplace, takes care of our bodily ablution and cleansing, and regards the sanctity of the body with a Divine care. Who are they that tell us that the Bible religion is a superstition, an affair of fancy, something having in it bright points here and there, and to be treated with proportionate respect? The Bible searches us, tries us, and finds if there is any wicked way in us, and is as careful about the body in its degree as about the soul in its higher plane, because nobler quantity. No man ill-treats his body with the permission of the Bible; no soul quenches its thirst at forbidden wells with the sanction of the Book which we believe to be God's. The Bible would keep society sweet, would watch

over our life with ineffable tenderness, would have us right in tone, wholesome, good at every point. A book so graciously exacting, charged with so Divine a spirit of discipline, is a book which will survive every assault made upon it, and return to the confidence of man after many an act of apostacy and ingratitude on his part.

A right view of God, a right view of labour, a right view of physiology, and then a right view of *society*. Not only is God interested in the individual man, he is also interested in the social, imperial, national world—humanity. What says he?—"Thou shalt not kill,"—however hot thy blood, thou shalt not kill; however apparently just thine anger, restrain thyself, lift not the hand to strike, have no weapon in thy fist,—“Thou shalt not kill.” Woe betide society when it holds human life lightly, when it regards human existence as a mere trifle in an infinite aggregate of circumstances and events! Blessed be that society which numbers the hairs of its children, in which a sparrow is not lost without knowledge, and in which a gracious economy will gather up the fragments that nothing be lost! This is Christian society which will not allow one chair to be vacant. Seeing that vacant chair, Christian solicitude becomes akin to Divine agony; a parental yearning makes the heart sore because one little child is absent, one wanderer is not at home, one man is missing.

“Thou shalt not steal.” It is not enough to be less than a murderer, we must be honest,—not superficially honest, not having hands merely untainted with overt crime, and theft, and felony; but thoroughly honest, sweet in the soul, really, superbly, almost Divinely honest in thought, in speech, in feeling, and in all the relations of life. Where is there an honest man, except in the common and superficial sense of a man who is not a thief? Honesty is not a negative virtue; honesty is a positive excellence. It renders to every man his due; it steals no man's reputation; it trifles with the property of no heart; it is more anxious to give than to take away. “Thou shalt not covet.” We are becoming more spiritual still. “Thou shalt not kill,”—to that we assented readily; “Thou shalt not steal,”—to that we also assented with large concession; “Thou shalt not covet,”—who knows when he covets? We can covet in secret; we can covet, and never speak

about the covetousness. Desire need not commit itself to audible terms. We can desire what another man has and yet can look the embodiment of innocence. The law is now becoming sharper, keener, more like a two-edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. We cannot keep company with this law in its inner and deeper meanings without finding that its intention is to divide us asunder, and search us, and try us, and never leave us until we become like the Law-giver himself. Can we wonder that Jesus Christ said he had not come to destroy but to fulfil?—that is, to interpret the law and give it its fullest and deepest meaning. When asked what the law was, he said, ‘All the law is fulfilled in one word—love.’ But we read the commandments and found no love in them,—because we misread every tone in the ancient and solemn music. You could not have the commandment but for the love which makes it law. Outwardly it looks iron-like, stern, rigorous, exacting, pitiless; but within its heart is large as the heart of God.

Mark the elevation of the commandments,—of what god are they unworthy? Their Divinity must have impressed us. Point out one weak word; lay the critical finger upon one line that is wanting in intellectual dignity or in moral splendour. By the nature of the laws themselves their inspiration may be vindicated. A bold task it was for any mere poet or dreamer to attempt to invent a commandment which would be worthy of God; but the task was realised. Great opening lines have been expressed in the very finest terms, in the most delicate and exquisite exactions and compulsions. Nowhere does this Decalogue fray away into pointlessness, vagueness, intellectual meanness, moral declension. From first to last the level is one, and the level is worthy of God. To find fault with the commandments is to injure ourselves; to trifle with the commandments is to jeopardise society. They are not repeated formally in the New Testament, but they are fulfilled in that holy covenant. We are now in Christ Jesus, if we are living up to Gospel privileges and opportunities; and, being in him, we breathe the commandments, rather than execute them as with arduous effort. They become part of our very life; they belong to us as the fragrance belongs to the odorous flower. They are no longer burdens grievous to be borne. We love them because we have experienced their love. Away with moral

legerdemain ! Away with the gymnastics which attempt to climb to heaven by their own moral cleverness ! We must go the right road, from God to man, from the law to the neighbour, from the heavenly image to the social obligation ; and if the Church would, in the spirit of Christ, without one taint of legalism or servility, keep the commandments, we should have a right view of God, a right view of labour, a right view of the body, and a right view of society. The life would be consolidated upon love and law, and lifting itself up with infinite strength, would be crowned with beauty, and on the top of the pillar would be lilywork ; RIGHTEOUSNESS and GRACE would form one noble, sublime, everlasting figure.

### NOTE.

"The promulgation of the law, including the construction of the tabernacle, occupied nearly twelve months—from Whitsuntide to Whitsuntide—as we should say. Throughout this period the people were encamped in the wide plain at the foot of the 'Mount of God.' The whole region seems to be called 'Horeb'; the *mount* is called 'Sinai.' Travellers seem now disposed to identify it with an isolated mountain which rises so abruptly from the great plain at its foot, that its northern cliff might be said to be touched by one standing in the plain. The northern peak is called Ras-Susâfeh; the southern, Jebel-Mûsa. It rises to a height of 2,000 feet above the plain, and about 7,000 above the sea level."—*Bible Educator*.

"A spacious plain (Er Rahah) confronts a precipitous cliff 2,000 feet in height, which forms the north-western boundary of that great mountain block called Jebel-Mûsa, which tradition and the opinion of travellers and authors of eminence alike point to as the mountain of the law. The plain is of a level character—as flat as the palm (*raha*) of the open hand. It is large enough, if needs be, to encamp all the hosts of the Israelites. There are fully 400 acres of the plain proper, exactly facing the mount, with a wide lateral valley, which extends right and left from the base of the cliffs. Besides this, there is a considerable further open space extending north-westward from the watershed or crest of the plain, but still in sight of the mount—the very spot, it may be, to which the trembling Israelites 'removed and stood afar off' when they feared to come nigh by reason of the cloud and thick darkness."—CAPTAIN PALMER.

## Exodus xxi., xxii.

### MINOR LEGISLATION.

WE have just heard the ten words. They deafened us. For a time we could not sufficiently discriminate between the accompaniments and the words themselves, for they were all blended in a most majestic and solemn music. Immediately following the ten words we find the almost endless details relating to human conduct and society which fill these chapters. The details are called "judgments," and they were spoken by the Lord whose voice was heard in the great thunders of Sinai. It is the same Lord; but how different is the voice! What a quiet tone pervades the utterance of the judgments! Was it really so quiet? or quiet only by contrast? What voice would not seem to be quietness itself after the reverberations of the thunder that shook the mount of God? In the one case, we have what we may term a very agony of legislation; in the second, a tranquil conversation or a private instruction. The figure which suggests itself instantly to the mind upon reading the twentieth chapter of Exodus and those chapters immediately following, is the figure of a torrent succeeded by a river. In the commandments we have a cataract rushing with infinite force; in the judgments we have that same cataract softened and quieted down into deep fluent water. If in the commandments, distinctively so called, we see the Sovereignty and Majesty of God, in the judgments we see the Fatherhood and gentleness of the Lord. In the commandments he stands far away from us, and drops upon the staggering earth syllables of lightning that make men afraid,—hence the people said unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die."

Some voices need to be accommodated to the hearing that is infirm. The great thunder cannot be borne seven days a week.

To hear it now and again is a sacred and memorable event ; but we were not made—so frail are we—constantly to be addressed by thunder and tempest. As if God had heard the request, he gave Moses the instruction which fills these two chapters. The tone of this minor legislation, if it may be so called, is full of Divine care for Divine work. The provisions of this code relate specifically to *life*. They are, as it were, commandments which God addresses to himself and which he then remits to the people. He will take care of everything he has made ; nothing escapes his attention. He did not make the eye for nothing, or the ear as an exercise of his power for the gratification of his vanity. Every hair of the head is claimed by him who made it. "If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish ; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake." We can trust this legislator,—he cares for the serving man, for the serving woman. What price does he put upon the smitten and perished eye ? Liberty ! In truth, he values his creatures highly. Not one day's rest, not one week's remission from labour, not one year's holiday ; but—liberty ! "And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." What a singular balance ! In the one scale a tooth, wickedly struck out, cruelly injured ; in the other scale—liberty ! Surely, the injured man has in some sense the best of it. Yet only in a local and narrow way : for truly interpreted, nothing can compare in value with anything the Lord God has made. The Maker charges highly for all his works. You must not trifle with your own eye, with your own tooth, with your own fingers,—they are God's. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ?" Are you still under the narrow baptism that teaches that a man's eye is his own, or his tooth, or his hand, or his ear ? Into what baptism have you been baptised ? Not into the baptism of Christ, if you are trusting to these base sophisms. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." We have nothing that we have not received. We are not our own ; we are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, which is Christ's. Whilst men are careless about the body, they cannot be careful about the soul. You cannot be careful about one part of God's work and careless

about another. A great argument sets in here. We must watch its majestic construction and prepare for its gracious and solemn application. In these two chapters everything goes down before *manhood*. The master has a writing by which he claims some property in the servant, but that covenant goes down before the manhood of the person who is held in temporary servitude. Man first, institutions next. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Nothing you can build up around man is so precious as the man himself. This is the central truth of Divine revelation. In fact this explains everything which makes up the mystery and the singular characteristic of the Bible. Philosophers endeavour to render in some brief and memorable formula the result of all investigations,—here is one which will serve our purpose in the meantime. The value which God sets upon man is the key-thought of the Scriptures. He begins now with some solicitude about the eye, and the tooth, and the limb,—by-and-by, who can tell what he will say? These are but alphabetic signs,—symbols, suggestions,—who knows what literature he will work out of these few initial signs? We must watch critically and religiously the outgoing and whole issue of these, comparatively speaking, insignificant and trivial beginnings. There is nothing trivial in heaven. All little laws are ruled by laws greater than themselves. This also is a principle in the Biblical philosophy,—if we neglect it we shall come speedily and hopelessly into great moral confusion. You may be narrowly right and broadly wrong. You may be operating by a little and temporary law at the expense of an eternal and irreversible statute or judgment Divine. Said the tempter to Christ, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is right to have the "things"; there is nothing whatsoever wrong in the temporary proprietorship of the things of earth and time. The law quoted—"All these things will I give thee"—is right enough within given limits. What is the greater law that over-reaches this,—swallows it up? That greater law is,—*"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* All gifts, all possessions, all rights, interests, institutions, expedients, understandings, covenants, must be held in obedience to that sovereign and all-absorbing law.

The Divine care of the *body* is the beginning of a still wider

and grander care. In the Old Testament the Lord could only begin with the body; any other speech would have been out of time, and, being out of season, would not have been understood. Its utterance would have created a perplexing mystery in the mind of man, and therefore would have led to all manner of misconception and misadventure. So the Lord begins by promising men *land*, and if the term *land* is not enough, he adds, the land is "flowing with milk and honey." The ancient man heard these words and understood them. Had he been promised a new realm of thought, a new imagination, a higher universe of dreams, he would not have understood the appeal. God promised his ancient ones *length of days*,—the only promise of the kind they could have understood. The world was not then prepared for the great word *Immortality*,—*Eternal Life*. So the Lord must begin according to the infancy of his pupils. They were but children; they would be pleased with milk and honey, and broad lands, long—long life. That was not the Divine meaning. The Lord could only rest for a moment in such a tabernacle as that. He never puts up a tabernacle without meaning a temple; he never offers land without meaning heaven, or length of days without meaning immortality. Blessed are they who have the inner eyes to see, in the little covenant written with ink, the beginning of a greater covenant which cannot be written, for no sea could hold ink enough nor would the firmament be broad enough to write the amazing stipulation.

If we could read these judgments regarding the body and society aright, we should feel that the Legislator must go farther into spiritual regions and into the most profoundly solemn religious issues. Reading along this line, given in these chapters, we become prepared for further communication. There is a spirit in man, and that spirit says we cannot rest in such judgments as these; we feel that these judgments must of necessity be but beginnings. The *Atonement* is in the very protoplasm of things; the Cross is in creation. We have too sharply and narrowly cut things into pieces as if they were not related to one another. Hear, oh Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord, and the law is one, and creation is one, and the ox, and the ass, and the bird, and the dog, and the wolf, and the worm,—all these are parts of an infinite quantity. The *Atonement* is not an after-thought, an

arrangement which the infinite Mind made to meet a temporary necessity. This is the meaning of "foreknowledge," and "predestination," and "election," and all the words which to some minds have been so grim and terrible. The very first thing that God did contains in suggestion and possibility everything he can ever do. Could we seize that thought we should be at rest! God can do but one thing. Had we the eyes to see and the ears to hear things innermost and eternal, we should know that God's *first* word was also his *last*. "I am Alpha and Omega." When God said, "Let there be light," he said all he has ever said or can ever say! The rest is detail; the rest is explanation given to infantile and backward minds. Constituted as we are, we require bulk as well as quality. God must not be too concise for our dense minds: he must put his word into a thousand shapes and utter it in a thousand tones before some of us can begin to understand that he has actually spoken at all. How lost we have become in the bulk,—in the quantitative department of revelation, not knowing that when God said, in the first chapter of Genesis, "Let there be light," he had no more to say. Everything is in light. It chases the darkness, it shows things as they are, it develops capacities and completes actions and uses; it is the revealer, it is as the Spirit of God amongst us. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. When light comes and the darkness flees away, we shall be in God's bright heaven.

There is an undoubted law of *evolution* in what may be called the Bible view of Providence. Find out that God cares for any one thing he has made, and all the rest of his Fatherhood is involved in that one act. Such is the argument of Jesus Christ; he said: "God cares for oxen." That involves the whole evolution of the Fatherhood. Said Christ: "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father,"—if so the Atonement is there; the whole mystery of the Cross is in that vigilance of God. Said the Saviour: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered,"—if so, the Atonement is the culmination of that elementary principle,—care, ministry on the part of God. Grand is the view of evolution from a scientific point. It is a noble and majestic thought. Say that God created molecule or germ, requiring the most powerful microscope which man can construct or detect; or say that it is

too minute to be brought within the power of any microscope yet constructed; say that out of that all the rest came by persistence of force—by what law you please—it fills the mind with a nobler wonder, it constrains from the enlightened soul a higher yet profounder adoration. You but increase the mystery of the Godhead and the majesty of his government.

It is so with the great question of Providence, law, and care for man. Given, that God cares for the least thing he ever made—that he asks for it, claims it—and you have in that assumption all the sphering out of ministries of care, and watchfulness, and love; yea, in God's claiming any leaf of the forest he ever made, any insect of the air he ever created, or brought into being by processes we cannot describe—having assumed that, you have involved in that assumption Atonement, Providence, Resurrection—all the mysteries of the gospel. God does not stop at points. The Lord's system of things is not incoherent and unrelated. The mystery is beyond all words. Yet when we say—"God over all, blessed for evermore," we use a form of expression which relieves the heart which is burdened with holy gratitude. Man is puzzled by details yet man will persist in plunging into the very middle of the Bible as if he could read it in that way. Man seems but in rare instances to have the power of setting himself right back at a proper point of view and seeing the movement of God, so far as the human family is concerned, in its totality.

So we read the commandments one by one, and ask if we have obeyed this or that. We have just seen men priding themselves upon pet virtues and upon special commandments which have never been violated; we have endeavoured to expose that sophism. The commandments are one; if we have broken one, we have broken all. Thus condensed may all things be, yet out of that condensation may all things rise as universes out of molecules, constellations out of quantities too small for microscopic recognition. This is the abbreviation of the judgment; this is bringing things back to the single point by which everything must be criticised and determined. We cannot be profound scholars in this book if we are reading it verse by verse, if we are building our life upon chapters and verses. The very breaking up of the Bible into this form is only for preliminary and infantile purposes. The Bible is one,—a line, a flash of light, a tone, a spirit;

it is not to be quoted in the last result; it is to be breathed; it is to be lived. Oppose the Bible! They do so who do not know it. Revelation is the indestructible fact, could we but come into the sanctuary of things and weigh them with the golden balances of the Divine appointment. Follow not those who, having found isolated texts or curious discrepancies, suppose that they are in a position to assail the citadel of revelation and overthrow the temple of faith,—blind leaders of the blind! “they will fall into the ditch”!

How bold a book is the Bible! What other book cares thus for man? God always looks after his child. He will have such arrangements made as never to allow the supreme value of man as a Divine creation to be ignored. Given that sublime conviction and acknowledgment, then you may have your temporary arrangements of high—low, employer—employed, master—servant, and the like. But all these little laws, necessary for a society in a process of education, must submit themselves for periodical criticism and judgment to the supreme law. One is your Master, One is your Judge. What book, let us ask again and again, cares so much for man as the Bible does?—Not one. Keep it in your families,—it will keep the father in his place, and the child in his place, and give a blessing to each. Keep it in your politics,—it will teach men to do unto others as they would have others to do unto them. Keep it in your business,—it will burn your false measuring rod and destroy your unequal balances, and be just to persons on both sides of the commercial counter. Hold up the Bible; read it in the right tone; distribute the emphases with the inspiration wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost; let the Bible itself in its own language, in its own way, in its own spirit, be heard, circulated, understood; and even yet we may rescue it from the hands of the conjuror, tear it away from the hands of the priest, and make it God’s own word to God’s own children.

## Exodus xxi.-xxiii.

### BYE-LAWS.

**A**MONGST these bye-laws there are some sayings which may be considered hard, and on reading them we may ask in almost plaintive and despairing tones, "Who is sufficient for these things?" There are also some out-of-the-way responsibilities, which only Divine wisdom and justice could in the then state of society have imposed. We must not permit ourselves to lose the religious philosophy and the religious beneficence of the Mosaic legislation by going back upon it with our Christian instincts and culture. We must forget all we have ever learned in the Christian school, and think ourselves back into the comparative barbarism of the age. Then we shall see a light above the brightness of the sun, and feel round about us an influence which cannot be satisfactorily explained without taking into account the possibility of supernatural existence and Divine sovereignty. We shall lose the whole meaning of ancient writings, so far as their religious philosophy is concerned, if we compare them to their disadvantage with Christian standards and the advanced civilisation of the day in which we live. Critically examined, fibre by fibre as it were, this is not crude legislation; there is nothing rough and ready in this distribution of offices, duties, and obligations. This legislation is, on the contrary, highly spiritual in its assumptions, and full of sublime tribute to the nature which is addressed. The dignity of law pre-supposes the dignity of man. Little laws for little creatures, great laws for great beings—that is the philosophy of the Bible system. Looked at, therefore, narrowly and critically, we shall find that, however crude in appearance may be some of these bye-laws, the substance under them, and of which they may be said to be the mere phenomena, is a holy quantity, a Divine substratum, nothing less than God, the Eternal Creator and Sovereign.

Without attempting to go through all the bye-laws, we can touch them here and there with sufficient distinctness and sympathy to understand the whole scheme of which some parts are here quoted.

"And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (xxi. 18, 19).

Are our little personal strifes noted in heaven? The answer is: Yes, every one of them. But *can* men strive together? Properly looked at, that would seem to be the harder question of the two. Coming suddenly upon a line of this kind, we should exclaim, in surprise, "The assumption is impossible. We must begin our criticism of a statement of this kind by rejecting its probability, and, that being done, there is no case left. How can men strive together? Men are brothers, men are rational creatures, men recognise one another's rights, and interests, and welfare; society is not a competition, but a fraternal and sacred emulation; therefore, the assumption that men can strive together is a false one, and, the foundation being false, the whole edifice totters down." That would be fine theory, that would be sweet poetry, it might almost be thrown into rhyme, but there are the facts staring us in the face. What are those facts? That all life is a strife, that every man in some way or degree, or at some time, begrudges the room which every other man takes up. The tragedy of Cain and Abel has never ceased, and can never cease until we become children of the Second Adam. Great degrees of modification may, of course, take effect. The vulgarity of smiting may be left to those who are in a low state of life—who are, in fact, in barbarous conditions; but they who smite with the fist are not the cruellest of men. There is a refined smiting—a daily, bitter, malignant opposition; there is a process of mutual undermining, or outreaching, or outrunning, in the very spirit of which is found the purpose of murder. But mark how beneficence enters into the arrangement here laid down. Not only is the man who smote his brother to pay for the loss of his brother's time; that would be a mere cash transaction. There are men ready enough to buy themselves out of any obligation;

a handful of gold is nothing. Their language is, "Take it, and let us be free." That would be poor legislation in some cases, though heavy enough in others. To some men money has no meaning; they have outlived all its influences; they are so rich that they can bribe and pay, and secure silence or liberty by a mere outputting of the hand. But the beneficence is in the next clause, "and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed." The man must be made as good as he was before, therefore he must be inquired about; he must be taken an interest in; he must become a quantity in the life of the man who injured him, and, however impartial the man who inflicted the injury may become under such chafing, the impatience itself may be turned to good account. Some men can only be taught philanthropy by such rough and urgent schoolmasters.

"If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death" (xxi. 28, 29).

In the one case provision is made against what we term an accident, and accidents are treated within their own narrow limits; but from accident we pass to purpose. The ox was "wont to push with his horn in time past,"—the ox was known to the owner to be an unmanageable ox; notice had been given to the owner of the temper of the ox; the ox, in short, had won for itself a bad character and reputation. If the owner allowed such an ox to go where danger and injury were possible, the owner was not released on the plea that an accident had occurred: he was held guilty of manslaughter. Is that ox still living? Yes. Is it possible that there are men to day who have oxen "wont to push with their horns," and who have killed ten thousand men, and are yet permitted to live and carry on this work of devastation? Do not fritter away the meaning of the injunction by fixing on the literal term, *ox*. The meaning is not to be confined within any one definition; the great solemn meaning is this: If your trade, occupation, method of life, is inflicting injury anywhere, and you have been made aware of it, you are responsible for the injury that has been done, and you cannot

throw off that responsibility. It was not the ox that did it, it was the owner of the ox. Guilt comes home to man. How stands the case? Each must answer for himself. The case applies to ministers of the Gospel, and teachers of every kind of doctrine. If a man preach any doctrine that poisons the life of the hearer, that degrades his best ambition, that narrows and diminishes his life's quantity, that fills him with discontent, peevishness, distrust, and jealousy; and if that preacher has been made aware of the effects of his doctrine, he is responsible for all the heart-ache, for all the up-breaking of life, for all the poisoning of health, and, at the last, hell will be too good a lot for so huge a murderer. The same applies to all men who lecture upon platforms, or who issue vicious books or other literature from the press. Whoever is guilty of the propagation of ideas that injure life, that impair its majesty, and that crush its best endeavours, is a murderer, and he must be held liable for the consequences of his deed. I fix the charge thus particularly upon those who are in the spiritual and intellectual function, that I may the more broadly and pungently suggest the lesson to every man in every other sphere and line of life that he may apply the doctrine to himself. This is the Divine doctrine: it is the rational doctrine, it is the right doctrine. There is nothing so supernatural about this as to cause us to resent it on the ground of its being supermundane, too lofty for us to realise. Reason is satisfied; conscience says "Amen"; the just heart rises up and says, "The judgment is true and righteous; let it stand." But what a revolution would be created in all teaching, in all commerce, in all social relations, if this one bye-law, respecting the "ox wont to push with his horn," were carried out this day!

"If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (xxii. 1).

That is the only way of getting at a thief. You cannot reason with him. He dismissed his reason before he committed his felony. He had first to strangle his reason; he committed murder in the sanctuary of his soul before he committed theft in the fields of his neighbour. What then is to be done with him? He must be made to feel the folly of theft; he must be made to feel that theft is a bad investment; he must be made to feel that he has played the fool even in the excess of his cleverness. The

thief would be made to know what dishonesty is, when for the one ox he must pay five in its place. He could have evaded an argument; he could have doubled upon a covenant, and have quibbled about the ambiguity of its terms; but he could not shuffle out of this four-square arithmetical arrangement. Five oxen for an ox, four sheep for a sheep; and by the time the thief had played at that game two or three days, he would have put on the garb, at least, of an honest man!

"If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution" (xxii. 6).

This is right. The Bible really builds upon granite bases; there is nothing merely fanciful in this legislation. This is sound common-sense, and common-sense in the long run wins the esteem and confidence of the world. No man may trifle with bread. Bad enough to burn down any kind of property; but to consume stacks of corn is to commit murder with both hands; to light the standing corn when it waves in the fields is to thrust a knife, not into one heart, but into the very life of society. How can restitution be made? It cannot be made. You cannot replace corn; money bears no relation to corn; corn is not an arithmetical quantity. Destroyed bread is destroyed life. Who destroys bread? He who makes poison of it; he who turns it into a drink that takes away the reason and deposes the conscience of men. He who holds back the bread-stuff until the time of famine that he may increase his own riches by an enhanced market value is not a political economist, unless, under such circumstances, a political economist is a heartless murderer. And if it is wicked to set fire to corn, is it a light or frivolous matter to set fire to convictions, faiths—the bread-stuff of the soul? Is he guiltless who takes away the bread of life, the bread sent down from heaven? Is he a pardonable incendiary who burns down the altar which was a stairway to the light, or reduces to ashes the Church which was a refuge in the day of storm?

"If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him" (xxiii. 4, 5).

Man never imposed that law. That is not a trick of human wisdom. It is too profound, too exacting, too full of implications of the noblest kind to have been invented by human nature. Who would not take vengeance upon his enemy's ox? Who would not hamstring the bullock? Who would not be pleased to see his enemy's ox going astray, running furiously mayhap along the wrong road? Who would not felicitate himself on such an occurrence, and think with cruel gladness about his enemy's disappointment and loss? But the other picture is more vivid still: "If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden." The enemy himself would be present personally or representatively, because the ass is not unburdened but burdened; he is, therefore, upon an appointed road and journey. Who would not rather taunt his enemy with the petty disaster and tell him to send for his friends to help him, and not to his hated and hating ones? "Who is sufficient for these things?"

But this is Judaism? It is *humanism*. But this old law is abolished? No, never can be abolished. It is one of the very laws which Jesus Christ came to "fulfil." Who can do it? To help the cause of a friend would be a pleasure, but to lift up the burden from the back of the ass of an enemy tears us in pieces: tests our quality. Nor can we do it in a mere law-keeping spirit. We know that to keep this law we must be above the law; grace must have begun its redeeming and inspiring ministry in our hearts before we can keep this law in the perfectness of its meaning. We have all opportunities of doing honour to this law. Our enemies need help to day. The man who spoke basely about us may need bread at our hand at this moment; his trade is in a bad way, though a good trade in itself. We could bring custom to his hand, and help him out of his embarrassments. If we hesitate to do so we must no longer bear the Christian name. Do release Jesus Christ from the responsibility involved in such reluctance, or in such disobedience. First let *him* go! We cannot love Christ and hate an enemy.

But is not sentiment now supplanting law? Have we not left the marble halls of justice, and entered a chamber decked with coverings of tapestry? Certainly not. Read on:—

"Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause" (xxiii. 3).

There is no mere sentiment in that. The meaning is : A man is not to be excused because he is poor. The effect of the law is, that a man is not to be treated with mere pity on the ground of his poverty ; the judge is not to say—"If you had been a rich man you would have been punished, but being a poor man we take pity upon you." When a man stands before the law, he stands neither rich nor poor ; he stands as one who appeals to the law of right ; he is there as a criminal : let him prove his innocence. So the Bible is not softly sentimental. It has not one law for the great, and another for the small, one ordinance for the rich, and another for the poor ; it is exceeding broad, it is impartial, it has in it the elements and the guarantees of complete security.

And is it all law—hard, iron, pitiless law ? Is all life reduced to a schedule of regulations—an infinite placard of times, seasons, appointments of a merely hiring kind, so much equivalent for so much labour ? Read on :—

"Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib ; for in it thou camest out from Egypt : and none shall appear before me empty) : and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in thy field : and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (xxiii. 14-16).

There is to be feasting as well as law-keeping ; there is to be a recognition of the Lawgiver as well as a continual attempt to obey the letter of the law. There was to be a feast of *memory*—the liberation from Egypt—there was to be a feast of *firstfruits*, and there was to be a feast of *ingathering*. When men put the sickle into the wheatfield there was to be a feast unto the Lord. Fifty days were supposed to elapse between the putting in of the sickle and the full ingathering of the harvest. At the end of the fifty days, there was to be a feast of ingathering, a looking up into heaven, a recognition of the Divine and supernatural element in life. They whose faces had been towards the earth, and whose hands had been put out in daily labour, were to look up to heaven and stretch out the hands to the skies, and to say by attitude and by voice, "We are not the hirelings of men : we are

the servants of the living God." We need these festivals; we need the holy day; we are better for touching one another in Christian companionship and worship. We ought to be the more righteous, the more lofty, for spending one hour in the house consecrated to Jehovah's praise. We cannot keep the law in all the fulness of Christian obedience until we have been with Christ, and learned of him. It is not our enemy's ox that is in distress, but our enemy himself. We are not called upon to study the mere framework of regulated society, and to attend to enactments and stipulations which will keep that society in skeleton-outline together; we have not come into a political society, but into a Christian brotherhood. We are not to be kept back from smiting only—that we have outlived long ago—but we have to come into the spirit of forgiveness, largest pardon, multiplied, heaped up, forgiveness and pardon—yea, here we may resort to all tautology of expression, if in the infinite redundancy of our speech we do but give some feeble hint of the passion of love that has been created in our hearts by the Spirit of the Cross of Christ.

Thus the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and Christ came not to abolish the law, even about ox, and ass, and theft, and burning of standing corn, but to fulfil it, to glorify it, to carry it up to higher meaning, and thus to consolidate the New Society—his Church—and make it infinitely precious and secure.

We look with some curiosity upon all these endless laws and exactions, and think ourselves well quit of a mechanism so detailed and vexatious. Herein we rejoice before the time. We are not quit of one of them. Is not our life also set in a marvellous network of law? If all the laws which are continually operating upon us and impoverishing us by their taxation could be set down in a book, we should marvel with exceeding astonishment at the mechanism under which our own boasted liberty is breathing. We call ourselves free, and rejoice that all the exactions of the past are done away, and that now it lies very much with our own will to say when life's work shall begin and end and of what it shall exactly consist. We enjoy no such liberty. We cannot put our foot down upon any point of the

earth that is not throbbing with the energy of law. Not a hand can be put out that is not entangled in the meshes of never-ceasing ordinances of life and nature. Cause and effect proceed eternally. The seedtime and the harvest are still linked by bonds that cannot be sundered. The evil-doer finds a thorn in his pillow every night. The oppressor is made to feel that he himself is under domination. Every morning has its duty, every night its sacrifice; the whole year round is but one unceasing opportunity for self-expenditure and self-control. Our liberty consists in our being able to do all the law requires with a steadier hand and a loftier purpose. The law itself is not suspended. Not one moment less of time does God demand; not one penny less of gold, not one thought less of spiritual consecration and intensity of mind; only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we have come to such complete devotion of soul that what aforetime was grievous is now pleasant, and what at the beginning was almost impossible has now become the chief delight of life. Never suppose that law has been lessened in its force or in its details; the effort is wholly on the other side, that we ourselves have been blessed with greater power and have been brought into sweet consent with the Divine purpose.

## Exodus xxii., xxiii.

### NEGATIVE COMMANDMENTS.

WE cannot read the book of Exodus without being struck by the number of things which we are not to do. These detailed and emphatic prohibitions we may regard under the name of negative commandments. We are not left to ourselves in any instance to determine a case of doubt; from beginning to end the Divine voice is clear, and direct, and final in its tone. These negative commandments are interesting upon every ground; but perhaps especially so as revealing human nature to itself. When we hear a command to do, or not to do, we hear in that command a voice which startles us into a new consciousness of our own nature and quality. To be told not to do certain things is now considered equivalent to a kind of affront—assuming it possible that we could do such things as are thus forbidden. We are annoyed, we are excited in a hostile way, at the very thought of it being supposed that we could have done these things which a high legislation attempts elaborately and penally to forbid. We must, however, think ourselves back to the time of day at which all these negative and positive commandments were given. We do not find them in the New Testament, because it is there assumed that we have attained that moral sensitiveness and that spiritual responsiveness which render it entirely unnecessary that we, with many centuries of civilisation culminating in our experience and history, should be forbidden to do certain things.

Take some instances, and use them especially as showing what human nature is apart from Divine direction and continual and gracious supervision.

Who, for example, would imagine that such a commandment as this could be given to any people who profess to know anything about the true God?

"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him" (xxii. 21).

Is it possible to vex a stranger? Does not the very fact of his being a stranger entitle him to generous hospitality? to a kind construction of his mistakes? Ought we not to be ready to turn his ignorance into wisdom and his inexperience to certainty of knowledge? Yet is it not true that man can vex a brother man who is a stranger and oppress him? Is it not done every day? Is it not one of the tricks by which we live? Do we not pride ourselves upon being too quick for the stranger, or knowing more than he knows? and do we not turn our knowledge to our own advantage and to his personal loss? Why, in this command from Heaven, we have the beginning of the great Gospel of Christ. To God there are no strangers. And to ourselves there would have been no strangers had we been faithful to God. Why all this strangeness? Simply because we have become estranged from the Father of us all. The strangeness began between man and God, not between man and man, and not until we are right with God can we be right with one another. We may make arrangements for momentary convenience; we may consult public sentiment and study the bearing and influence of public doubts in relation to one another; but we cannot be as one heart, and one soul, until we are one with God through Jesus Christ his Son. You cannot permanently tinker the world; there is no rent in it that can be filled up with material at man's command. The disease is desperate, vital, and only God, the Physician that is in Gilead, can find the healing for the disease infinite and unspeakable. But the command is a looking-glass. A man looking into it may see himself, see what he would do under given circumstances. The assumptions of the text are impeachments; put those impeachments into words, and how stands the great accusation? Thus: you would vex a stranger if you could; you would oppress a stranger if you could do so with impunity. You perhaps think you would not, but the deepest reading of human nature gives this as a result of the study of the human constitution that none can be so savage as man; there is not a beast in the field or in the forest that can equal man in cruelty. We talk about savage beasts and cruel and fierce creatures made to devour one another; but there is no cruelty so terrible, so unsparing, so pitiless, as the cruelty of the human heart. That is the accusation; we must leave the proof to human consciousness

and to human history. We understand how men revolt from the suggestion, and how they cover up their passions by paying compliments to own their tenderness and sensibility; but the mischief is—the subtle and tremendous mischief is—that our very tenderness may be a calculation, our very tears may be shed as an investment for our own benefit. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

Akin to this commandment; there is another. The tender words are these :—

“Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child” (xxii. 22).

This is the Gospel of Christ in the book of Exodus. This is God the Father. There is a majestic solemnity in his voice that is full of ineffable tenderness. This is the Father of all. Would men afflict the widow, or the fatherless child? The answer must be frank and direct, and that answer will be in the affirmative. Who speaks for the widow?—God; and the orphan?—God. Then be cheerful, take heart again; the Orator who speaks for you is God. There are no fatherless children in the deepest sense of that term. As for the fathers we have had after the flesh, they themselves were children, as were their fathers and all their ancestors. There is only one Father. Let us take hold of hands and make a great ring round the family centre and say—holding each tremulously, lusty manhood, thriving childhood—timidly and lispingly,—“Our Father which art in heaven.” Given the time when men shall say so with a sound heart, with an undivided mind, with a loyal and constant affection, and then find the angel who can tell where earth ends and heaven begins. Wondrous it is—yea, more and more so—that there should be found any friendless people, poor lonely destitute people, who do not love the Bible. Find me in it one text that does not warn the rich man to take care, for he is standing upon a very slippery place, and when he does slip he plunges a long way down. Find one text in all the glowing volume that rebukes the poor, that is hard with the struggling, that smites the penitent man in the face, that forbids a little child to trouble the Jehovah of the universe. Weakness, poverty, helplessness, homelessness, disease, pain, hunger, thirst—these are thy clients, thou Servant of us all.

Changing the place altogether, you will find another commandment of a tone somewhat startling and surprising.

"Thou shalt not revile the gods . . . of thy people" (xxii. 28).

This is a passage difficult to understand and impossible fully to explain. In other places, we find idols broken, temples erected to forbidden names thrown down, as by great thunders, and lightnings, and strong winds blowing contempt from eternity upon the petty creations of the debased religious imagination. Yet consistently with all this there is to be no reviling of gods. This is a subtle lesson. Mock no man's religion—point out the inadequacy of it, show the vanity of the small idolatrous form, remark with pungency, if you please, upon its grotesqueness and its helplessness; but confine your remarks to the visible thing. That can be treated in this way with obvious reasonableness; but the religious instinct lies deeper than you have yet realised if you have been confining your attention to the mere forms of idol worship. The religion is beyond the idol,—above it, below it, away from it. The idol itself is a mere symbol to typify the inexpressible infinite. You do not convert men by mocking their convictions, by reviling them on account of their mistakes. Do what you please with the opprobrious idol—lift it up to prove how little it is in weight; set it down to show how helpless it is in your hand; throw it over to show that it cannot defend itself; but you have not treated the whole case in its entire scope and reality by thus treating the merely visible form of a religious conviction. Men may be mistaken in their convictions of a religious kind; show them the truth; live the truth; illustrate the possibility of living perfect, lofty, noble lives; create a religious wonder in the observer of your life as to the range of motive by which your conduct is mellowed and impelled; so live that you cannot be accounted for, except on the basis that you are living, moving, and having your being in God. Thus, and not by fluent mockery will men be drawn from their own mistakes to partake of the convictions which are as rational as they are beneficent. There is no poor suppliant crying to idols and praying to the empty and mocking wind that does not prove by that very act the mysterious, the Divine origin of the heart that can thus make such egregious mistakes. They are the mistakes of a Divine creation: they are not the petty mistakes of human ignorance. In the plunge of idolatry there is the apostacy of one almost God. It is a rush into a darkness from which any

mere beast would flee in terror. Do not mock conviction; do not revile mistakenness of apprehension. Do what you please with the mere idol and with the transient ceremony; be even angry with these,—yea, destructively angry,—but find out in them an instinct, an emotion, a mystery to which you must address yourselves, not in the language of taunt, but in the language of sympathy, with a burning desire to redeem from prostitution an instinct which makes humanity.

“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (xxiii. 2).

Can a multitude do evil? One soul may stray, but can a whole multitude go away from the light and make itself houses in forbidden places? Can the majority be wrong? There is a sense in which the majority is at this moment against Christ. I would not count it so; rather would I see Christ in many disguises; but I should know it to be the very Christ, whatever the disguise which concealed the dignity. Christ has been with men when men did not know it; their eyes have been holden that they should not see him; he has revealed himself to men under many concealments of a strange kind. There is more Christ in the world than we possibly may suppose. God is infinite; God fills all space, and yet takes up no room; God mingles with thinking, civilisation, action, and yet the human factors in all the mysterious action may be unaware of the Divine presence and impulse; but there has been an unveiling, a sudden revelation of the reality of the case. We are waiting for that millennial disclosure. What if some day God shall look right in the face of the very people who have been doubting or denying any relation to him, and should thus convince them that all the time they have had nothing that they have not received from himself? and what if they should also be surprised by the recollection of a warmth of the heart, a glow of the soul, they had never felt before, and should find in that fire the presence of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? God may be working in you without your knowing his name, or without your being at present able to trace the Divine action, as distinctly separate from human thinking. We are waiting for the day of revelation, the morning of surprise, when we shall stand before God, saying, “Lo! thou wast with us and we knew it not. How solemn is every place which thou hast made!” But when the multitude does evil, we are not to follow it; we

must stand still and protest against the evil ; in other words, we must see the evil and not the multitude. Always put the emphasis upon the right word, in order to encourage yourself in good action and in straightforward conduct. The emphasis is not altogether upon the word *multitude*, it is upon the word *evil*; and we ought to ask God to be enabled so to pronounce the word *evil* as to feel revolt from everything which it implies and suggests.

Looking at these negative commandments, are we not surprised at the wonderful knowledge of human nature which they reveal? We cannot get away from them; we cannot plant ourselves right in front of them and say, "This is a misinterpretation of human nature." We cannot return the dreadful look of the eyes that shine out of this revelation; we feel that we are in the hands of a Legislator who knows us altogether, and who speaks to us not according to transient and accidental phases of human nature but in the totality of our being. This is the strength of the Bible, this is the vindication of the commandments: that they root themselves in our constitution, that they know us, and that we can only escape their pressure by telling lies to our own souls. Herein is the inspiration of the Book. Its portraiture of man is a portraiture without a blemish or a flaw. He who drew man so completely in every lineament of his image, in every emotion and sensibility of his nature, must have made the man whose portrait he has delineated.

These commandments also show the true relation of God to the human race. He is the Ruler. He enjoins, he forbids; he never comes with apology from the skies, or palliation of sternness, but with the majesty of right. Yet there is one little word in the midst of all these commandments full of sweetest gospel—a word that might have been found in one of the four Evangelists and that might have formed the text of every sermon preached by Apostolic wisdom and eloquence. The sentence you find in the twenty-second chapter and the twenty-seventh verse: "For I am gracious"—a word we cannot do without. We cannot explain it, yet we feel that it fills all space in human necessity and consciousness which no other word can fill. This is the defence of the commandments: that they are not arbitrary expressions of mere sovereignty of will and position in the universe, but that they, though commandments, are expressions of grace, mercy,

pity, love. The very Spirit of the Cross is in the commandment. Sinai is but one phase of Calvary.

We try to evade many of these commandments on the plea that they were not addressed to us. It is a hollow plea; it is in fact a lie. We turn away from the commandments, saying, with an explanatory gesture, that we are not Jews. We are, if we are in Christ; if we have any love for Christ; if we feel that we must follow in some fashion the way and method of the Son of God. The Christian is a Jew *plus*. Christianity is the fruition of Judaism. The blood of the One Priest that abideth for ever and hath an unchangeable priesthood gathers up in its redness all the meaner blood which typified and prophesied its shedding. As well may the oak say "I am not an acorn" as Christianity say "I am not Judaism." We cannot have the two Testaments torn asunder as though they had no relation one to the other. The New Testament would have been impossible but for the Old Testament. The song uttered in heaven is the song of Moses and the Lamb. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Yet Jesus Christ said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." If he did not recite these negative commandments, it was because he came to put within us a Spirit, a Paraclete, that should abide for ever, whose presence was a law, whose operation in the soul was a daily instruction in righteousness and wisdom, in love and pureness, in which he may stand above the commandments and treat them as an obsolete letter—who has entered into the Spirit of Christ, and who is breathing in his daily life the obedience to which earlier men had to struggle through many an effort, and in struggling towards which they effected many a mournful failure. God never tells us to trust our moral instinct; God never assumed that the child could find its own way through a universe which it had darkened by its sin. He wrote down every line, made it complete; he wrote a detailed and complete specification of duty, service, action, and worship; if any of us have outlived the mere letter and need it no more, praised be God for a spiritual education which has delivered us from the bondage of the letter and led us into a nobler bondage of the heart, a sweet servitude of the soul, a glorious slavery, a glorious liberty!

### Exodus xxiii. 20-33.

20. Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

21. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.

22. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

23. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

24. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

25. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water: and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

26. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

27. I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

28. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

29. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

30. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased and inherit the land.

31. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

32. Thou shalt make no covenant with them nor with their gods.

33. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

### THE ANGEL IN LIFE.

**L**AWS without angels would turn life into weary drudgery. Life has never been left without some touch of the Divine presence and love. From the very first this has been character-

istic of our history. When our first parents were cast out of the garden, the Lord said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." That was a prophecy, bright as an angel, comforting as a gospel, spoken from heaven. The difficulty is that we will interfere with the personality of the Angel; we will concern ourselves about his figure and name. Instead of accepting the ministry, and answering a great and solemn appeal addressed to our noblest faculties, we ask the little questions of prying and often profane curiosity. It would seem to be our nature to spoil everything. We take the instrument to pieces to find the music, instead of yielding ourselves to the call of its blast, to the elevation of its inspiring gladness, and to the infinite tenderness of its benediction. We are cursed with the spirit of vain curiosity. We expend ourselves in the asking of little questions, instead of plunging into God's great sea of grace, and love, and comfort, and waiting patiently for revelations which may address themselves to the curiosity which is premature, and to the prying which now can get no great answers. The solemn—the grand, fact is, that in our life there is an Angel, a spirit, a presence; a ministry without definite name and altogether without measurableness; a gracious ministry, a most tender and comforting service, always operating upon our life's necessity and our heart's pain. Let us rest in that conviction for a moment or two until we see how we can establish it by references to facts, experiences, consciousness against which there can be no witness. We prove some assumptions by the facts which flow from them. We can only establish the existence of some substances by grouping together the phenomena which they present. Into the substances themselves philosophy cannot penetrate; but philosophy can gather together the appearances, sometimes all the elements and effects which are grouped under the name of phenomena, and can reason from these groupings that there must be underneath some unknown, some unknowable substance which expresses itself in these superficial and visible appearances. So our assumption that there is an Angel ahead of us, a radiant light in advance, a heavenly presence in our whole life, may be established by references which appeal not to imagination only but to experience; and if we can establish such events we shall have also to establish the sublime doctrine that in the midst of humanity there is a light of Divinity, and at the

head of all the truly upward advancing host of men goes the Angel appointed of God.

See how our life is redeemed from baseness by the assumption that an Angel is leading it. Who can believe that an Angel has been appointed to conduct a life which must end in the grave? The anticlimax is shocking; the suggestion is charged with the very spirit of profanity. We could not allow it in poetry; we should resent it in history; we should despise it in all dramatic compilations and representations. You must not yoke a steed of any blood in too small and mean a chariot; you degrade some horses of repute by sending them to do certain base and unworthy service. Is it not so with men also? Are there not men whose names are so lofty, so illustrious, that we could never consent to their doing certain actions too vulgar and low to be worthy of their brilliant repute? Does not the law admit of the highest and widest application? If an Angel is leading us, is he leading us to the grave? Surely it would not need an Angel to conduct us to that poor destiny! We could wander thither ourselves; the blind could lead us, and they that have no intelligence could plunge us into that dark pit. And we *feel* that we are not being led to the grave. It is possible that some of us may have so lived that the grave would be too good a destiny for us; but I speak of those who have tasted of the sweetness of true life, who have risen above the dreary round of mere existence, and who have tasted in ever so small a degree of the wine of immortality,—men who have felt throbs of infinite life, hearts that have been conscious of pulsings never started by human ingenuity, and such men shrink from the suggestion that all this life, so full of sacred possibility and gracious experience, should terminate in the gloom of the grave. Who says that life was not meant for the grave? The Angel. Whose ministry is a daily pledge against annihilation? The Angel's. What is it within us that detests the grave, that turns away from it with aversion, that will not be sent into so lone and mean a prison? It is "the Divinity that stirs within us."

Then again, who could ask an Angel to be a guest in a heart given up to evil thoughts and purposes? Given the consciousness that an Angel is leading us, and instantly a series of preparations must be set up corresponding with the quality and title of the leading Angel of our pilgrimage. We prepare for some

guests. According to the quality of the guest is the range and costliness of our preparation. Whom our love expects our love provides for. When we are longing for the coming one, saying, "The presence will make the house the sweeter and the brighter, and the speech will fill our life with new poetry and new hope. Oh, why tarry the chariot wheels?" then we make adequate—that is to say, proportionate—preparation. The touch of love is dainty, the invention of love is fertile, the expenditure of love is without a grudge or a murmur,—another touch must be given to the most delicate arrangement; some addition must be made to the most plentiful accommodation; love must run over the programme just once more to see that every line is worthily written. Then the front door must be opened widely, and the arms, and the heart, and the whole being to receive the guest of love. And that is so in the higher regions. If an Angel is going to lead me, the Angel must have a chamber in my heart prepared worthy of myself. Chamber!—nay, the whole heart must be the guest-room; he must occupy every corner of it, and I must array it with robes of purity and brightness that he may feel himself at home, even though he may have come from heaven to do some service for my poor life. Any appeal that so works upon every kind of faculty, upon imagination, conscience, will, force, must be an appeal that will do the life good. It calls us to perfectness, to preparedness, to a nobility corresponding in some degree with the nobility of the guest whom we entertain. If you please, you can fill your heart-house with mean occupants. There are evil visitants that will sit down in unprepared hearts and eat up your life a mouthful at a time. It lies within your power—not within your right—to make your heart-chamber the gathering place of evil things, evil thoughts, evil presences; but any conviction that would lead in that direction proves its own baseness, lies beyond the circle of argument, and is not to be treated seriously by earnest men. Now it is the distinguishing characteristic of Bible-teaching that it wants clean hearts, large hearts, ample entertainment, noble thoughts, sweet patience, complete sacrifice, having in it the pledge of final and eternal resurrection. Any book offering such suggestions of Angel presences, radiant leaderships, Divine associations, proves its own goodness, and its own inexpressible value.

Suppose, however, that in our obstinacy and narrowness of mind we hesitate to accept the suggestion of a living Angel, we lose nothing of all the gracious meaning of the text by substituting other terms. We have to grow up to the apprehension of Angelhood ; but the stages of growth can be marked by common terms, and so the growth can be proved to be possible. Many a life has in it a memory playing the part of an Angel, a recollection full of tenderness, a reminiscence that lures the life forward little by little up steep places and through lone and dark valleys. Some might call such a memory an Angel. Why not ? It discharges the offices of a blessed minister, it redeems life from despair, it fills life with gracious encouragement, it nourishes life in times of destitution and dejection. Now whilst some minds may be unable to accept the transcendental suggestion of Angel ministry, it is a poor mind—hardly to be reasoned with—that cannot conceive the idea that a memory, a recollection, a vow, an oath, may play an inspiring part in human education, and may save men from evil deeds in the time of tremendous temptation. We all have memories of that blessed kind. We know the vow we spoke, the oath we took, the pledge we gave, the word that passed from us and became solemn by sanctions that could not be remitted except at the expense of the soul's integrity. Yet we have killed many an Angel. What slaughter we have left behind us ! Stains redder than blood show the awful track our lives have made. Mark Antony pointed out the various rents in the robe of the murdered Cæsar, and identified each rent with the name of the cruel smiter. So we could do with the robe of our own lives. See where the dewy pureness of young prayer lies mangled ; see where the holiest oath of obedience lies with a gashed throat which can never be healed ; see where purposes chaste as mountain snow lie murdered and forgotten ; see where words of honour plighted at last interviews in whispers softened by tears lie crushed, contemned and mocked,—gather up all the images, the facts, and the proofs, which memory will accumulate, and, as you look upon the hideous heap, regard it as God's Angel, unheeded, degraded, murdered ! Thus we do not escape the pressure of the argument by refusing to accept the supernatural term *angel* ; we do not elude the critical judgment by endeavouring to run away from appearances which are charged with such

high titles as Spirit, Angel, Divine minister. We have to answer appeals formed in terms of our own creation. Our common speech itself gathers up into an expression of judgment, and if we imagine that we have never seen an Angel or resented his ministry, we have to account for it that our memory, our vow, our plighted word, our testimonies spoken to the dying, have been forgotten, neglected, abandoned, disavowed; and when we have answered a lower appeal we may be prepared to reply to the challenge which sounds upon us with a more terrific thunder from higher places.

The Divine presence in life, by whatever name we may distinguish it, is pledged to two effects, supposing our spirit and our conduct to be right. God undertakes our cause as against our enemies. Would we could leave our enemies in his hands! I do not now speak altogether of merely human enemies—because where there is enmity between man and man, though it never can be justified, yet it admits of such modification in the system of words as to throw responsibility upon both sides—but I speak of other enemies,—the enmity expressed by evil desire, by the pressure of temptation, by all the array against the soul's health and weal of the principalities of the power of the air, the princes of darkness, the spirits of evil. Send the Angel to fight the Angel; let the Angel of Light fight the Angel of Darkness. We have no weapon of our own invention and manufacture fine enough to strike the subtle presence; but God is our Guardian. Are not his angels "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation"? Sometimes we in our own human personality have not to fight, we have to stand still and see the salvation of God,—to stand back in God's eternity and say, "The battle is not mine, but thine; I cannot fight these dark ones; I cannot strike these presences, for they elude all weapons at my disposal: undertake for me and I will stand hands down waiting to see the outworking of thy redemption." If we had more faith we should have fewer enemies; if we had more trust in God we should have less anxiety about our foes. We must not encounter the serpent alone; we must not attempt to find answers in the ingenuity of our own minds to the plaguing challenges and temptations of the evil one. The enemies arrayed against us are not those of flesh

and blood, or we might in some degree meet them, elude them, disappoint them,—we fight “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,”—what have we to oppose to these? The Angel—God’s Angel, the white-robed one,—and he by his holiness shall overthrow all evil, for it lies with the Lord to chase the darkness and with holiness to put down all iniquity.

The second effect to which the Divine presence in our life is pledged is that we shall be blessed with the contentment which is riches. God said he would take sickness away from the midst of his people: “There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.” We must not be too literal, or here we shall miss the meaning. As we have been in danger of misinterpreting the term *angel*, we are equally in danger of misinterpreting the term *sickness*, or *poverty*, or the general word *circumstances*. We know nothing about these terms in the fulness of their meaning. We do but live an approximate life; we see hints and beginnings, not fruitions and completions. What will God do for us then?—He will give us a contented spirit. What does a contented spirit do for a man? It turns his poverty into wealth, his sickness into energy, his loss into gain; it gives him to feel that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, but is a life hidden in the mystery of God’s own being. Thus we have mysteries amongst us which the common or carnal mind cannot understand. Man asking God’s blessing upon what appears to be unblest poverty,—men saying it is enough when we can discover next to nothing in the hand uplifted in recognition of Divine goodness. Thus we hear voices coming from the bed of affliction that have in them the subdued tones of absolute triumph; thus the sick-chamber is turned into the church of the house, and if we would recover from dejection, and repining, and sorrow, we must go to the bedside of affliction and learn there how wondrous is the ministry of God’s Angel, how perfecting and ennobling the influence of God’s grace.

The “hornets,” spoken of in verse 28, must be taken figuratively. The Egyptian made as a symbol of princely quality and princely power the wasp and the bee. These were Egyptian symbols.

Remembering the history of his people, going back to the period of their Egyptian bondage, seeing upon Egyptian banner, and fresco, and all manner of things royal, the image of the wasp and the bee, God said,—I will send hornets before thee that can do more than these painted things can possibly do : I will destroy by a power that cannot be controlled : I will kill armies by hornets, I will dissolve hosts by winds that are charged with elements that life cannot withstand ; I will be thy friend. God does not fight with one weapon ; God's method cannot be predicted. The wind is his, and the pestilence, and the tempest, and many things that we cannot name or control, and they are all pledged to work in favour of the cause of righteousness and the white banner of truth.

Thus our hearts may claim a great and solid comfort. We are not going through the wilderness *alone*. As Christians we believe in the guardianship of Christ. Our prayer is "Jesus, still lead on." Angel of the Covenant, let us feel assured of thy continued presence. Guide us with thine eye. The road is long, hard, and often inhospitable, but it is measured every inch, and no man could lengthen it. It is good for us to be sometimes in the wilderness ; there we long for rest, there we sigh for companionship, there we mourn for one sight of flowers and one trill of birds carolling in the sunny air. The wilderness tames our passion, chastens our ambition, modifies our vanity : we can do nothing in sand ; we cannot cool the fierce air ; we cannot melt the rocks into streams of water. In the city man becomes boastful, there men outrun one another and get richer than their brethren ; they spread themselves like green bay-trees ; and fester in the noisomeness of unblest success ; but in the waste of the wilderness, in the dead flats of affliction, in the monotony of sorrow, they learn how frail they are, how helpless, how dependent upon Angel ministries. Bless God for the wilderness ; thank God for the long nights ; be thankful that you have been in the school of poverty and have undergone the searching and testing of much discipline. Take the right view of your trials. You are nearer heaven for the graves you have dug if you have accepted bereavements in the right spirit ; you are wiser for the losses you have bravely borne, you are nobler for all the sacrifices you have willingly completed. Sanctified affliction is an Angel that never misses the gate of heaven.

## HORNETS AND ANGELS.

"And I will send hornets before thee."—EXODUS xxiii. 28.

"And I will send an angel before thee."—EXODUS xxxiii. 2.

GOD brake the ships of Tarshish with an east wind, a puff of breath. He told the east wind to seize their masts and torment them to their destruction. Dagon was thrown down upon his face, though he was locked up with the ark, and no hand was near him; yea, he was utterly broken to pieces so that he was not a god at all. How was this? The chariots of God are twenty thousand. Can you remember twenty thousand names? Can you venture to say, "This is, and this is not, one of the twenty thousand"? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. A great wind battered the Armada of Spain in a critical moment in English history. Thus God has more resources than those which are merely human. We gather ourselves together as if we were all his belongings, as if he depended upon us alone, and we talk, and resolve, and organise, and go forth, as if the Lord had nothing else to depend upon. Mayhap that is partly right. A man may do more if he thinks that everything depends upon himself; but he should cheer himself, and bring great encouragement into his soul, by remembering the number of God's chariots; they are twenty thousand. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and the stones of the field were covenanted to help those that feared the Lord. Nature helps, nature hinders, nature is God's other self, and his chariots are twenty thousand strong. The Lord God is a sun and shield, he is a spear and buckler, he is a pavilion and a sanctuary. The lightnings gather themselves round him, and say, "Here we are"; his ministers are the frog and the fly, the hornet and the locust; the fiery flying serpent and the hidden viper, the child, the angel, poverty and plenty, are his servants; yea, all things praise the Lord by their sympathy and help, so much so that if

we were to hold our tongues, the universe would not be silent. "I tell you that if these were to hold their peace, the very stones would cry out, for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He shall never want a minister to stand before his face. If so be thou art a minister, boast not thyself of thy ministry, for a hornet may take thy place, a frog may dispossess thee, and there may be none to find out thy footsteps. Be thankful, hopeful, energetic, glad ; but boast not, for boasting hastens death.

The one thought that is to inspire us is that God has many ways of helping his people, likely and unlikely, but they are ways of his own choosing, and therefore they will end in success. Hornets and angels,—Are not the ministers of God both visible and invisible ? The flying hornet you can see, but who can trace the angel in the air ? Can you see the angel ? He is there, notwithstanding your inability to descry him. You see the hornet. Ah ! we are all quicker in seeing the hornet than in seeing the angel. Fie on us, shame on shame, till we be burnt with blushes. Can you see the angel ? You cannot always tell what forces and ministries are fighting either for you or against you. We do not know the meaning of nature. She is a parable we have not fully read or understood ; an eternal lesson, God's perpetual illustration of himself. Oh that we had eyes to see and hearts to understand ; for the library is always open, and the writing is always done by an angel's hand.

A man says, "A curse on this hornet, this winged, stinging insect, only a large bee, only an exaggerated wasp—a curse on the thing. I dare not open my window, for it may fly in ; I dare not go out, for it hovers near my door and may smite me with its cruel sting. It never sleeps, it seems ever to fill the sultry air." He does not know what he is talking about : he thinks it is an insect ; he says : "Why did God make such a creature ?"—ah, why ? He calls it insect ; when he has been longer at school he may call it minister of God, and servant of the Most High. He is fretted by its unceasing and energetic buzz ; by-and-by he will hear music in it, a sad and terrible music. That hornet is sent of God to drive you out : it will not die ; you have been doing wrong and it has come to punish you. That hornet is death, or loss, or pain, or bitterness of soul. That hornet is not a mere

insect; it means judgment, penalty, retribution, death. I wish people would see the great meaning of things and not the little trifling suggestions.

I will tell you what to do with the hornet. Hear me—bad man, hear me: I have a gospel for thee. Outrun it: thou hast two legs, two leaden feet—outrun the hornet. “I cannot.” Then that will not do. Close your hand upon it. “I dare not.” No, you dare not. Then that will not do. Bribe it: coat your window-sill with sugar, inches thick, and it will glut itself to death. “Aye, I will try that.” Ah, it grows by what it feeds on. It is a stronger hornet for the sugar. It took your bribes and strengthened itself against you. I will tell you what to do: compromise with it, propose terms, negotiate, send a third party. “Oh bitter irony, oh mocking man,” say you?—Yes, I mean to mock, for who can outrun the chariots of God? No, sir, no: stop, turn round, fall down, confess, pray; cry mightily to God to take the hornet back. That is the true gospel: hear it, and thou shalt live.

Then on the other hand there is a kind angel that can be nearly seen, and that can be almost heard, and that can be all but felt. Thank God for the things that are *nearly*, that are *all but*, that are just about to begin to be. Thank Heaven this verb of life is not all shut up in the indicative mood. Wondrous conjugation—indicative, potential, subjunctive, infinitive—how the verb grows; how the little “I am,” a child’s first mouthful, grows into the immeasurable eternity. Think of this kind angel, who is all but seen, who is so near as to be almost felt. You catch an aroma which he must have shaken from his wings. Bless God for these occasional hints, and touches, and blessings as we go on. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Then remember the hornet will fight for you as well as against you. If you are in the right way, the hornet is your friend. It will pursue your enemies, it will bring them to reflection, it will drive them to repentance, it will force them to prayer. That hornet never dies. My God, my Father, follow not my enemies with the hornet, if gentler means will bring them to their senses; but bring them to their senses, even if it take the hornet to do it.

Hornets and angels—are not the agencies of God both humble and illustrious? See the contrast, the flying insect and the flying angel, yet they are both the messengers of Heaven. Suppose them to meet one another in the summer air—what a talk they might have! Saith the hornet, “Why does he send me when he has servants like you who can do his work so much better than I, poor winged insect, charged indeed with a sting, can do?” Saith the angel, “Why am I not employed in studying the deeper problems of the universe, when little mean insects like this could go about the work of visitation, and penalty, and judgment?” Then they catch the Divinity of the purpose, they realise their election in God, and they say, “He doeth as it pleaseth him in the armies of heaven and among the children of men. There is no meanness in doing his work. His household is infinite and his servants are many—away, sting the enemy, bless the friend, let the decree of punishment be confirmed, and let the gospel of benediction be proclaimed.” So away they go, hornet and angel, to carry out the will of just but clement Heaven. Beware: the angels of God and the hornets are both his servants.

Hornets and angels—are not God’s agencies material and immaterial? Of matter and of spirit doth he not make his ministers? The hornet is of the earth, the angel is of the skies; the hornet is from below, the angel is from above. There are no barren spaces in God’s universe. All that great sky, on which you have never driven your small vehicles—beginning in your little baby’s cart, and ending in your last hearse-ride to the gaping tomb—all that blue ground, what is it but an armoury in which he stores his resources? All things are his; all things are mine if I be in him: if I am in Christ all things are mine: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, past, present, future—all, for I am Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Oh, hide thee in the broken heart of Christ, shelter thee in his wounded side: do not be living in thy little mean propositions, and small theories, and miserable dogmas, and noisy controversies—hide thee in the bleeding side of the wounded Lamb of God. Then all things that fought for him will fight for me, and if I do not fight, but stand still and suffer, draw no sword for me: thinkest thou not that I could pray to my Father, and he would give me more than twelve

legions of angels to defend me wherein I am right, and am hidden in his Son Jesus Christ ?

Has there been a hornet in your estate lately ? I wonder what it meant. Why cannot you kill that hornet ? It comes by every post. You dare not open that letter—there is a hornet in it. It comes by many a telegram. You dare not open the third telegram you get to-morrow—there is a hornet in it. When life is sharpened into a pain, when loss swiftly succeeds loss, when the rich showers fall everywhere except on our own garden, when every flower withers, when the first-born sickens and the eyes are filled with mist, when the strong hands tremble—men should bethink themselves : the hornet of the Lord is then piercing the very air with its sting, puncturing our life and giving it great agony. Do not call it insect ; call it God—do not call it misfortune—let the atheist use up that same inheritance ; it is not misfortune, it is—Providence. Oh, the hornet stings me, frets me, plagues me ; will not let me have a holiday, knows when I am going out, flies faster than the lightning express, waits for me at the sea-shore, goes with me over the sea.—Beast ?—no : God, law, righteousness, mercy, didst thou but know it. It is sent to pain thee into prayer, for thou hast sinned away thy visitation day, and now it is God's turn. Lord, teach us the meaning of these hornets ; they are hard to bear. We dare hardly turn over any leaf for fear a hornet should spring up and sting us : our life is now one daily fear—teach us the meaning of this, and by prayer may we find the remedy.

Has there been an angel in your estate lately ? I say it with shame that we are much quicker in seeing the hornet than in seeing the angel ; our cry is readier than our hymn, our fear is more emphatic than our love. Is the angel in your estate ? Do you say you do not know ? Then I will find him for you. Be still awhile. Are the children all well ? “Yes.” Flowers budding, singing-birds returning, the rain over and gone ? “Yes ; but the garden is much less than it used to be.” A few flowers in the window ? “Just a little box full, about eighteen inches long.” Still, you have them ? “Yes.” Bread enough ? “Plenty.” A few friends ? “Few, but good.” The angel is in

your lot. Give these things their highest meanings. There are plenty of people outside who would drag down life and make it smaller and smaller in its meanings. I would be sent of God to widen speech till it takes in all that it can of God's purpose and God's life. Poetry will have faith ; faith itself is the poetry of reason ; carry it up to its highest uses, and make your life as large and luminous as you can.

There are some people who are afraid of giving too great meanings to the events of life. There they get miserably wrong. When the ruddy morning comes, do not be afraid to call it the awakening angel. There are people near you who will call it fantasy ; those people are lean, bony, shrivelled, dessicated, mean ; and when they tell you that this is fantasy, and that is poetry, they speak out of themselves : they have no gospel to deliver. If thou dost meet a man on the high-road who takes up a flower and says, "Sir, this flower is a child of the sun," make friend of him rather than of the man who takes it up and says, "Ah, poor thing," and throws it over the fence. When spring spreads her green carpet and makes the warm air live with wordless songs, do not be afraid to call it God's angel. There be little, narrow, pence-table men who say, "It is spring, and there is rent day in spring, and there is hope of good trade in spring, and spring is one of four seasons of the year, and spring begins on the sixth and ends on the twentieth, and spring . . . is nothing more."

"A primrose on the river's brink,  
A yellow primrose is to him,  
And it is nothing more,"—

quoth William Wordsworth in one of his poems. So happily did he hit the fool who does not see the angel in the flower. Get you books teachers, preachers who greaten things, who raise up children unto God out of the stones. The world needs such apostles and interpreters, or we should get very low indeed. The great expectation will bring the great reality ; the great name will be as a bush with the great fact glowing in it like a revelation. Look you for the angels, for the angels prepare with all the generous hospitality of your love, and the angels will come and make your house their sanctuary, and show you the Eternal Presence.

So God rules his world. "I will send hornets before thee, and they will drive out the Hivite and all the nations that set themselves against thee. I will not send angels to fight the Hivites : let the hornets do it. And I will send an angel before thee, and he will find thee a resting-place, space for the sanctuary, and he will give thee peace." Great God ! rule us still ; spare the hornets, we cannot bear them, but send the hornets, if nothing else will bring us home.

"I will send," saith the first text, "I will send," saith the second. Then do not *you* be sending anything ; sit still ; I am afraid of your sending things. "I will send hornets,"—then do not you be sending your nasty, bitter, cantankerous letters, keep your hands off post-cards, do not write anonymous slanders on sheets of paper you borrow from other people. "I will send," then do not interfere with God's movements. He knows when to send, how to send, how many to send, where to send—let him do it. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not : yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. I have seen the great gourd of the wicked arching over his blasphemous head—lo, in the morning it was not. Why ? For God prepared a worm—a worm, and the worm cankered the root of the gourd, and it withered away. Send angels if you can—live as if you would send ten thousand angels, sweet blessings, tender gospels, messages of the heart. You live in that direction, and some day God will pick you up in one of his chariots and drive you to the very camp of your enemies and show you unto them as their true friend. I will stand in God ; I will rest in God.

Let the hornet do its work ; let the angel fulfil his ministry. God's people cannot be permanently injured ; and as for God's Church, it shall be set up on foundations broad and immovable, and all its glowing pinnacles shall pierce the clouds, and God's will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

## Exodus xxiv.

### MOSES IN THE MOUNT.

THIS account would seem to be supernatural and miraculous. What is supernatural? What is miraculous? We are fond of using these great words, but it is one thing to employ them and another rightly to measure and apply their meaning. What is miraculous to one man is commonplace to another. We should not be astounded by the miracles if we had correlative faith. The surprise of the disciples at the miracles did not throw any doubt upon the miracles themselves, but showed only too plainly the want of faith on the part of the observers. "How is it," said the Master, "that ye have no faith?" If we had faith there would be no miracles in the present narrow conception of that term; all our course would be lifted to a new level. Our wonder is the measure of our ignorance; our scepticism expresses the lack in our hearts of that wondrous power of interpretation and assimilation which is known by the name of *faith*. What is supernatural? and to whom is it supernatural? What is the standard? By what scales do you weigh things? We do not all stand upon one mental level. We must, therefore, go into individuality of heart, mind, attribute, and general condition, before we can understand the particular uses of so marvellous a term. What is supernatural to one man would seem to be the natural climate of another man's soul. When we read the large words of advanced philosophy,—when these words are brought under the attention of a great variety of persons, to some they will appear to be almost supernatural. They are so odd, so wholly unknown; they bear upon their faces lineaments not strange only but almost repellent; their image awakens no recognition in the consciousness of the reader; they are words that might be dismissed without the consciousness of loss. But to another kind of reader the words are friends, the longest of them is short, the

most out-of-the-way term is a well-known companion in many a long day and night's study. So when we come upon incidents in the Scriptures which appear to be uncommon to a degree involving what is generally known as the supernatural and the miraculous, we ought to find out the quality of the reader before we determine the quality of that which is read. All men do not read the Bible with the same eyes. Some men can read the Bible through at one perusal: they eat and drink abundantly at God's table, and the festival never sates the appetite, but rather whets it and makes it long for further revelation and satisfaction. Other men cannot read the Bible at all. The very first verse is a gate they cannot open: they are puzzled, bewildered, discouraged: in them is no answering spirit; when the Bible and they meet, a process of indignation seems to be instantly set up. Beware, therefore, of the indiscriminate and lavish use of such terms as *supernatural*, *miraculous*, *transcendental*, and fall back upon the mystery of your own constitution as explaining a good many of the difficulties which rise like mountains in your way. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye would say to these mountains "Begone!" and they would vanish, like mist in the dissolving sun. But we must, in the spirit of decency and justice, protest against a man bringing his no-faith as the standard and measure of Divine revelation. The more spiritual we are, the less we shall be affrighted by the supernatural; the more carnal we are—loving the dust and living in it—the more we shall be alarmed by what is termed the miraculous element in the Bible. Sometimes by our criticism we rebuke ourselves—it may be unconsciously, but not the less severely. It is the reader who has fallen from the upper level; the Divine revelation has never lost its line. Suppose we regard this marvellous incident as setting forth the possibility and blessedness of rapturous communion with God, we lose nothing of the moral grandeur and scenic majesty of the occasion. Even as a historical record it may only transcend reason as poetry transcends arithmetic. If you take away the poetry of life, you take away the vowels from the alphabet. What is left when you have taken away the few from the many, the speakers from the dumb? You have a cluster of consonants, but no language. The consonants are dumb, the consonants cannot utter a tone, the consonants wait until the vowels

breathe into them the breath of life. It is the same with the Bible and the spiritual element. It is no Bible when the supernatural element, so called, is removed. Take out the spiritual, and the Bible is but a framework of consonants; insert the spiritual, and the Bible becomes a revelation. Many of us are waiting for the vowels. We feel as if we had something to say, but could only set the lips in a certain attitude, but utter no articulate speech. We have much because the consonants are more in number than the vowels. We have thought that bulk was wealth; we have said that it is more important to have many than to have few. Therein we have made a foolish speech. We must have both consonants and vowels if we are to have language, song, true music. So the spiritual or miraculous element plays the part of the vowels in this wondrous Book of God.

But Moses was called to *solitary* vision and communion of a spiritual kind. So he was. We need not stumble at that. "Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders" were not called to the same summit as Moses. Quite true. This is happening every day. The peaks of the mountain are less populated than the base. We must not deny the mountain because we have never climbed it. More persons have admired the Matterhorn than have stood upon its pinnacles. It is always the one man who sees first, hears most clearly, and is gifted with special utterance. It is so in all departments and ranges of life. Each of us has some prince who leads our thought—ay, and who gives speech to our heart's dumb desire. The hireling waits for the clock; the poet longs for the dawn. Dawn!—what language is that? Not a hireling's. Say "bell," say "clock," "hour," and you speak the hireling's measurable terms. But what is the "dawn"? Who made that sweet, liquid, tender word, without one line of hardness in it, requiring a woman's softness of heart and speech to utter it as it ought to be spoken? Many a man has risen in the morning who has never seen the dawn. Others have gone up into the dawn, and have seen much and pledged the soul in many a holy oath and covenant before coming down into the market-place to do life's rough day's work. The prophet is always alone. You cannot pluralise him. When he is near you, he is not one of you. The prophet is always—mad. When a man is solitary in scientific investigation, when he is far ahead

of "Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders," we call him a philosopher; when the daring traveller goes out alone over sea and land and finds a river, a hill, a village, a colony, that no man of his country or speech ever saw before, we call him a discoverer;—when a man ascends the hills of religious contemplation and communion and is shut up with God forty days and forty nights, not knowing the pain of hunger or the silence of solitude, we call him an enthusiast, a fanatic, a dreamer. Thus we distribute our tinsel honours! There will be a better judgment some day,—the first shall be last and the last shall be first. He will be most philosopher who has prayed most, most a discoverer who has brought to bear upon the inspired record the keenest insight and quickest sympathy; he shall be a prince who has had power with God. We must not judge the acquisitions of others by the meanness of our own spiritual results. Do not blame Moses for the rapture,—let us blame ourselves for the want of it.

We need not stumble even at the tenth verse, which reads thus: "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." The soul has eyes. There are hours not related to the clock; there are birthdays for which the calendar provides no line of registry. How natural is this endeavour to make the conception plain by a visible picture, and how visible pictures are lifted up to new meanings and clothed with new solemnities by such sacred uses. There have been times, even in our cold experience, when nature has had to be called in to help the expression of the soul's delight. We too have made comparisons; we too have been inventors of parables, sometimes roughly outlined, but still having jewels in their meaning, even "sapphire stones" and the "body of heaven." We have compared our supreme love to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot; we have chosen the apple-tree amongst the trees of the wood, and have said that best images our soul's one Love, and he in his turn looking round has seen a lily among the thorns and said, "That sweet lily represents my chosen one." Every heart has its own image, or parable, or symbol, by which it sets forth to itself the best aspect of its supreme delight. When we want to represent God, and our view of him, how naturally

we turn to the heavens. No earthly object will suffice. There burns in us a sacred contempt for all things measurable. We want all the broad brilliance of noonday, all the tender glory of the midnight, all the pomp of the summer sky. There is verily a natural religion ; it is a poor deity that can be set forth in clay, and iron, and carved stone. Find any race that has lifted up its religious conceptions so as to require for their imaging all heaven, and surely you have found a race that may at any moment alight upon the true God. What Ezekiel saw was as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. John said that the face he saw was like a jasper and a sardine stone, and the rainbow which gave tenderness to the throne was in sight like unto an emerald. When Jesus was transfigured, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Do not take these as equivalents, but as hints,—some idea of the majesty which must have beamed upon the eyes of worship as they gazed with religious awe upon sights for which there is no language. It does us good to be wrought into passions which transcend all adequate speech,—yes, it does the soul good to pray itself into silence. We may have clear vision of God to such an extent as to have every word taken away from our use and be left dumb in the eloquence of silence.

Nor need we stumble at the twelfth verse, where the law is promised and where the written commandments were given. When we are most religious we are most inclined to proclaim the law. It is a poor rapture that does not come down upon legislation with a new force, a firmer grip, and a deeper conception of its moral solemnity. Know whether you have been with God upon the mount by knowing how much law you have brought back with you ; and when you would read the law, read it after you have been long days and nights with the Lawgiver. Then there will be no harshness in the tone, nothing terrific, repellent, unsympathetic, but the laws, the commandments, the stern words will be uttered with a suppressed power equal to tenderness, with an awe equivalent to an interpretation, with a quiet solemnity that will have in it none of the sophism or violence of threatening. The commandments have not been rightly read : they have been pronounced in a judicial tone. How much better to speak them in tender whispers. Thou *shalt not* have any God

before the true Jehovah,—I have seen him. Thou shalt *honour* thy father and thy mother, for God is *both*, and I have been a long time with the Father and have studied and felt his motherliness. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. All these things grieve him, are opposed to him, excite not the petty anger of vindictiveness but the ineffable grief of wounded holiness. Thou shalt not—thou *must* not. In the name of righteousness, holiness, tenderness, beauty, harmony, music, truth, *do not* on the one hand, and *do* on the other.

Moses was absorbed in holy vision. The visible is not always the most real—may we say that the visible is sometimes not real at all? We must be in certain mental moods before we can understand that speech. People speak about believing their eyes. I know not of less credible witnesses than our eyes! Discredit them and distrust them at once. You will be duped by many a sophism if you trust to your eye for sight. The eyes are within—faculties spiritual, themselves unseen but always seeing. We ourselves have been so transported with sacred rapture or have been so absorbed in deep thought as not to have known where we were, by what circumstances we were environed. Speak of environment!—it has a thousand times been burst asunder or transcended by consciousness for which there is no adequate name. These give us hints of the sublime future of disembodiment. We shall be clothed upon with our house from heaven. The leaden flesh that keeps us tethered to one place shall go back to the dust whence it came, and the spirit-winged fire shall go back to the God who gave it. We shall not always be slaves, or prisoners, bound to particular places and fastened down by particular chains.

These absorptions, raptures, supernatural communions, if you so please to term them, give us hints of jubilee, festival, immortality. Do not dissipate their meaning by a superficial criticism of the letter, but magnify and glorify their meaning by giving to them all the sympathy and adoration of the spirit. From the level of every life there is a way up to the mount of God.

## Exodus xxv. 21:

"Thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee."

### THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY:

THE TRANSIENT SYMBOL OF AN ETERNAL TRUTH.

THIS twenty-fifth chapter supplies minute information as to the construction and contents of the ark. The children of Israel had but recently received the formal law through the ministry of Moses. Up to this time they had worshipped under the open sky, and all the host of heaven had seen the manner of their life. In this chapter it is proposed to have an enclosure, a tabernacle, a place screened and roofed, how unsubstantially soever, which was to be known distinctively as the house of God. This proposition was, indeed, the commandment of God himself: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take my offering, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

But was not this a movement towards limitation, instead of a progress outward and onward towards wider spaces, even towards infinitude itself? How if the Divine message had read thus: "Speak unto the children of Israel that I am about to enlarge the sphere within which their life has heretofore been confined; they shall now see the higher and larger stars, and an ampler horizon shall gladden and satisfy their vision"? Instead of this, God proposes the erection of a small house, by which he would seem to shut out all the beauty and most of the light. For the moment, at least, we are disappointed; expansion, not contraction, would have seemed more like the way of God. But think awhile, lest we mistake proportions and meanings which lie out of sight. What we call Infinitude—the quality which over-

flows and confounds our imagination—must contract itself, so to speak, if we are to get sight of it; and in this sense the building of the small house, called the Tabernacle, was not a movement towards limitation, but towards concentration, and intensity, and tender nearness. A man may have all the earth round about him, and yet have nowhere to lay his head; plenty of space, but no home; a universe, but no Sanctuary; infinitude to roam through, but no Father to speak to, and no Heart to rest in. All great love has to make boundaries for itself; to put itself into little homely acts, and to use words which simple souls can understand. The mother who would die to save her child has to put her great love into a picture, a toy, a babble better than all eloquence. The great ALL must break itself up into the available *Some*. It was but small consolation to the petulant man in the parable to be told, "All that I have is thine"; he wanted some of it to be going on with,—“a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” So, even in our common life, we get hints of things that are going on above.

This tabernacle was built for the reception of the ark. A wonderful tabernacle it was, as one glance at the specification will show—"Gold, silver, brass, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; goats' hair and rams' skins dyed red; oil for the light; spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense; tables overlaid with pure gold, dishes, spoons, covers, all of pure gold." So God's house was no poor hut run up in an hour or two; but so delicate in its richness and beauty as to be more a thought than a thing. It was no creation of human fancy. Moses was no more left to settle the plan and the furniture than Noah was left to settle the colours of the rainbow. There was not a ring, a knob, a loop, a socket, a coupling, or a pin, which God did not specifically design. It was the same when he made the larger house which we call Nature: there was none with him when he laid the foundations of the earth, and when he made a tabernacle for the sun he was alone. It is wonderful, indeed, how little there is of man's own doing anywhere. He has undoubtedly hammered a few things into shape, and brought together a few walls and roofs which he calls cities; but he borrows the foundation from God, and the rivers are not his own, nor is the light other than a visitor sent from God. It is pitiful to see man's

work exactly as it is; pitiful to see the shortness of his ladders and what trouble he has to set them up; and it sometimes makes one cry bitterly to watch him falling off the very summit of his victories into the dust out of which he came. He cannot bind the unicorn with his hand in the furrow, nor doth the eagle mount up at his command. He is a servant. Let him know his place and keep it. Take your counsel from God, and ever listen for the voice which says—"And look that thou make it after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount,"—the mount of Suggestion, where we may see in forecast, in gilded and wreathen clouds, what God would have us build for his glory and our own comfort.

As God made a tabernacle for the sun, so he made a tabernacle for the ark, out of which streams a light above the brightness of the sun. The ark of the covenant was a box or chest, say fifty-four inches long, thirty inches broad, and thirty inches high. This box, made of choice wood, was overlaid with pure gold. The lid which covered the box was called the Mercy Seat. Observe that particularly. Over the lid, or mercy seat, were two golden cherubs, one at either end, facing each other and covering it with their expanded wings. God promised to meet Moses at the mercy seat: "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony,"—a promise which explains the words of the Psalmist, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth"; a tender reference to the olden time, a memory of childhood, full of pathetic meaning and tender retrospect. Within the box were placed the two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written by the finger of God: "I will write on the tables the words that were written in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark." Thus furnished, the ark was deposited in the inner place, in the holy of holies; indeed, in the first Book of Chronicles, the holy of holies is called "the house of the mercy seat." So much, then, as a help towards an outward view of the ark of the testimony. A box; a box made of choice wood and covered with pure gold; a box set away in a holy and well-guarded place;—plain enough, so far, yet around this box there shall gather meanings deep as

the springs of life, and histories full of uproar, and tragedy, and progress; and in the end the ark of wood shall be lost, but the Law and the Mercy which it enshrined or symbolised shall be felt to be in a still holier place and in a more enduring sanctuary. Thus, the corruptible shall put on incorruption. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." What we call History—the shallow and insecure vessel which holds the dregs, but allows the aroma to escape—says that the ark was destroyed when the Babylonians set fire to the temple, and declares as a certainty that the ark was not contained in the second temple. Perhaps not. We need not be curious about the merely material ark. It descended, in idea and purpose, out of heaven from God, and it was seen amid "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail," in the temple not made with hands,—uncontaminated by the earth which it had blessed, and unchanged in meaning by all the mutations and dangers of its eventful history.

The ark may be taken as symbolical of the Divine presence, or the Divine plan in human life. It was a visible form of an invisible power. Again and again in private and public history we come upon a peculiar and almost unthinkable *Something* which focalises and rules all minor administrations; a subtle something, which makes superstition tremble, and constrains religion to pray; now a hand upon the wall, now as the spell of a dream, a benediction of heavenly sweetness, a judgment pure and terrible as fire;—Something which analysis cannot exhaust, and which scepticism cannot deny. In the ark, for example, you find *law*. See, too, the peculiar place occupied by law: the ark is in the tabernacle; not only in the tabernacle, but in the most sacred part of that sacred place; not only in the holiest part of the holy house, but actually in the *midst* of the ark is found the immutable law of God. Thus we have law at the very centre and heart of things! Not an occasional flash, but a steady, ever-abiding, all-controlling force. Under all surfaces, far below all coverlets woven and arranged by skill of man, deeper than all foam, and tumult, and revolution, is to be found righteous and inexorable law! Some call it fate; some, "a divinity that

shapes our ends"; some, "God over all, blessed for evermore." But there it is! Creation is held fast together at all points by the grip of law. Not a pebble slips off the edge of the world; not a bird wanders away to another star, though it be the nearest light; no drop of dew trickles into forbidden places; and as for men, in their maddest ambitions they do but strike the bars of their prison, and awake by their frantic impotence the remonstrance, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Sometimes, indeed, the excellency of the wicked has mounted to the heavens and his head has reached unto the clouds; yet out of this hidden ark there has come a voice of doom—"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down." Nor is this a boast which cannot be tested. All history confirms it. To deny the operation of this mysterious and sovereign law is to take away the key without which history is an impenetrable and confounding enigma. Human history is the visible side of Divine revelation. You have *law* at the centre; and you must obey that law in all material things, even though you resist or despise its spiritual demands. You may have an atheistic character, but you shall not have an atheistic wall; though the bricks and the stones be banded with iron and cemented with molten lead, yet will they be thrown down if you mock the law which holds up the older masonry of the universe. In this matter, as in all others, peace can only come by righteousness. That which is at the heart of things is *right*: not something fickle, eccentric, tantalising; but *law*, RIGHTEOUSNESS, GOD!

But, happily, the ark represents something more than law; and every reflective man will acknowledge that in the system within which we live, there is a mystery for which some gentler name than law must be found. The lid of the ark was the seat of mercy. It signified propitiation, favour, mediation, ground and medium of communion with God. Study that tender symbol a moment, if you please. Law, in coming up from the centre, comes through the lid or covering of mercy; it is, so to speak, attempered, or it would come like a sword, or a fire, or a judgment terrible in righteousness. On the other hand, starting the movement from the outside, in our appeal to law we go through

the medium of mercy. We do not, dare not, challenge the law in its own name or on its own merits. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Our approach is through mercy, and our daily prayer is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is most instructive to mark how a life founded as ours is on law, is continually proving the presence of something other and sweeter than law; and it is humiliating to find how easily we exaggerate that tenderer quality, so as to delude ourselves into the belief that law is secondary and impotent. See how law is made almost gracious. Take, as an illustration, the law of hunger,—how terrible, how urgent, how inexorable is that law; how soon it assails the life with consuming fire! Yet God has made our food more than a mere satisfaction of hunger: he has provided things savoury and dainty in pasture and vineyard, so that hunger brings with it enjoyment and even religious gladness. That which would burn us with unquenchable fire, is attempered, and softened, and turned into an occasion and process of enjoyment. Yet how true it is that this very attempering and softening of law brings with it temptation and peril! Hence, appetite conquers reason, and the tender mercy of God becomes an occasion of licentiousness and aggravated sin. Take any law of your own nature; see how severe and terrible it is in itself; observe how it is graded and modified, so as to become, not tolerable merely, but enjoyable in its operation; and then say whether we have not every one of us made the goodness of God an excuse for trespass and indulgence.

Thus, then, the ark is symbolical of something we ourselves have known in life, apart from specific religious teaching,—something of law, and something of mercy; a power of condemnation, and a power of recovery and healing; a severity very terrible, and a goodness that yearns over our life and offers us redemption. Whether we accept the Biblical names and interpretations of these forces, or laws, or phenomena, there they are, as broad and vivid facts in our daily life; and no sophistry of reasoning, or perversion of fancy, can get rid of their solemn and pathetic operations. The severe winter and the gentle summer; the stormy wind and the still small voice; the bitter pool and the tree which sweetens it; the dark fear and the sunny hope; the herb that stings and the herb that heals,—these things, known to our senses, strewn

all over our life as lessons we ought to learn, show us that this ark, even if only a creation of fancy, symbolises with startling clearness the reality, the grandeur, and the sweetness of life as we know it. This, indeed, is the peculiar glory of the Bible, namely, its marvellous forecast of things that have turned out to be, and its felicitous representations of the times that were to come upon the world. He would be a churl only, and an unjust man, who would deny at least this literary tribute to the dreamers and seers of the Bible.

In noticing a few remarkable points in the history of the ark, we shall be more careful about the spiritual teaching than about the mere chronology of that history, and thus we shall secure closer continuity of doctrine and illustration. As our song is to be of mercy and judgment, it will be grateful to us first to see how the mercy of the Lord was revealed amongst his people. Thus:—"And the Israelites departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them. . . . And it came to pass when the ark set forward that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee: and when it rested he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." And again, though Moses died, yet the ark remained a symbol of mercy in the days of Joshua:—"The officers commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it; yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure; come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore."

Thus the law of human movement is turned into a tender and minute direction by God's condescension. Unquestionably there is a law of movement. We *must* go forward. How? Into darkness? Into danger? Into thickening mysteries that bring with them sevenfold darkness, and trouble that makes the soul afraid? No; we are offered guidance, defence, and rest! "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord"; "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way." The

journey was only three days long, yet it must not be taken without the foregoing ark. The people had not gone a certain road before, and therefore they must be accompanied by the sacred symbol of the Divine presence. A flood was ahead of them ("for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest"), and therefore the mercy of the Lord must prevent and defend and mightily save his chosen; so "the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord." A wonderful hint this of the place of what is called Providence, in nature. The ark clears a space for itself everywhere. Strange roads become as familiar scenes, and threatening waters are dried up in the channels they have proudly overflowed. Why should we doubt the mere letter when the spirit of such miracles is attested by evidence so accessible and incontrovertible? Christian missions alone furnish a history radiant with this self-same miracle. Foreign lands have become sweet homes under the benediction of the sacred ark, and hearts that overflowed with contempt and rage have opened themselves in wondrous submission and love to welcome the Lord and his hosts. The same miracle has turned our own life into a marvel and a joy, times without number. Have we not been called to unknown places, and thrown into combinations which have baffled us by their intricacy, and forced into roads which seem to end in darkness? What of the days when we were poor and friendless? What of the first gate ajar that tempted our feet into new pastures? What of the first great sorrow that threatened to swallow us up and to destroy our life as with a flood? Did we not then hear a voice which said, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"? In proportion as we have been in difficulty and distress, in peril and loneliness, and have seen the delivering hand of God, do we read the record of these old miracles as a familiar language,—not the less real and spiritually *true* because of figures and symbols which to the unsympathetic mind are mere creations of poetry. We ourselves have seen visions, and have felt raptures, which poetry alone could hope to express even in dim and imperfect outline. So much for what has been already known. Ahead of us rolls the overflowing river. "What wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" Arise, O Lord, thou and the ark of thy strength, and the waters that I fear shall flee away, and the floods

of Jordan shall be as heaps on either side of thy redeemed and rejoicing servant.

At this point of the history we touch the ark of the covenant with sympathy deep and tender. We ourselves have seen, felt, known, and handled this ark of God. Now and again we have in impious venturesomeness gone forward without it; and what has come of our self-confidence? The imaginary rocks have been as bogs under our feet, and our best devices have lured us into peril. The river has not parted before us, nor has a way been found for us in the desert. On the other hand, we have awaited the rising of the ark; and have followed as it led; and what has been the result? Progress, safety, rest; mountains have been thrown down, and fierce countenances have softened into friendliness and welcomes; we have entered upon a way where no lion lay in wait, nor any ravenous beast could be found,—the way of the Lord's redeemed upward without steepness, with heaven shining at its end. Well may we say, therefore, that the ark has not been lost: "In the temple of God is the ark of his testament." The wood and the gold have perished, but mercy and judgment still rule us from the heavens. "Lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail," still have their place in this earthly life; but in God's temple is seen the "ark of his testament."

As we have thus seen the goodness of the Lord, we may now behold also his severity, as shown here and there in the history of the ark.

(1) Remember the account of the fall of Jericho, and how usual it is to represent the overthrow of the city as almost due (such is the popular impression) to the blast of "seven trumpets of rams' horns." Out of this circumstance has come much teaching about the possible success of improbable instruments and agencies, as if it were only necessary to have a ram's horn in order to do great wonders in the wars of the Lord. The ark of the testimony was at the taking of Jericho, and *must* be at the taking of every stronghold. "And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed the priests." "And the rearward came after the ark."

"So the ark of the Lord compassed the city." It was not the tramp of priests, or the blast of rude horns, but the ark of the Lord, that brought down the strong wall. It is not our officialism, our music, or our noise, but the name of Christ—the true ark of the covenant—that must bring down the pride of heathenism and all the ramparts of ungodliness. "My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Be still, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

(2) Recall a second instance. Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer ; and the Philistines pitched in Aphek ; and Israel was smitten before the Philistines, and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. In dismay, Israel sent to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant, saying, "When it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." So the ark was brought ; and when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And the Philistines were afraid, and said, "God is come into the camp." But the Philistines conquered Israel, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark itself fell into the hand of the enemy ; and the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod, and set it in the house of Dagon their god. Israel sent for the ark in extremity, as many a man sends for God in the hour of fear and mortal distress ; but the ark would not become the mere convenience of capricious and disheartened men. If we stopped here, mistaking, as hurried readers are apt to do, a semicolon for a period, we should say that the ark was worsted, and that Dagon had triumphed over Jehovah. But, lo, the strong god of Philistia was found in the early morning "fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord"! It was but an accident, mayhap, so Dagon must be lifted up and set in his place again ; but the second morning found Dagon in still sadder plight, for his head and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, and only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Many warriors have taken Christ captive ; but he has troubled them until they have cried with the Philistines, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord ? Tell us wherewith we shall send it

to his place." Some victories are the profoundest defeats which any cause can sustain. When Christ and Dagon are brought into close quarters, it is Dagon that dies! A man of Benjamin rent his clothes when the ark was taken; when Eli heard that the ark had been borne away, he fell backward and died; and the wife of Phinehas called her son Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken!" Such is our shortsightedness in looking upon the ways of the Lord. Unchristian men do not know what to make of Christ, even when they suppose themselves to have taken him prisoner in some fierce war of words. They seize him as their prey; they condemn him to exile or death; yet there is something about his name that troubles them, and there is a fire in his words which gives them pain. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," said the falling Dagon. "God is a consuming fire," say all they who intrude upon his throne. How to get rid of Christ—the living Ark—was the urgent question of his enemies! They besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. "Away with him! crucify him!" was the indignant cry. He was slain, yet he is found in heaven; as the symbolic ark was burned by Nebuchadnezzar, yet seen in the temple of God. In the kingdom of God, Destruction is an accident, Ascension is a law. Weep not for the ark, weep for yourselves. "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; they stoop, they bow down together," for the hand of the Lord is heavy upon them.

(3) A third instance will confirm what has been said about the severity of God. At the bidding of the priests and the diviners, the Philistines sent away the ark, upon a new cart, drawn by two milch kine on which there had come no yoke, and by the side of the ark they put jewels of gold as a trespass offering. Even then the Philistines were not sure whether it was "a chance that happened" to them, or a judgment direct from Heaven. They set a test that they might know this, and the test showed that God had been amongst them of a truth. When the ark came to Bethshemesh, the people were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and when they saw the ark they rejoiced with exceeding

joy. But, alas, the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark of the Lord; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he slew of them a great multitude. Is the Lord ever patient with our foolish curiosity? Can any man *see* God and live? It is precisely here that so many men are slain to-day. We go too near the sun, and we are blinded by the glory we would analyse. God will not submit himself to our examinations; hence we find thousands of dead critics where there ought to have been a living Church countless as the stars in number! Let there be a space between us and the ark—"about two thousand cubits by measure"—for "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

(4) An incident not remotely related to this scene at Bethshemesh occurred when, at the instance of David, all Israel went up to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, "to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord." The bringing up of the ark was again the occasion of great joy. The people had not inquired at it in the days of Saul. David's proposition, therefore, revived an ancient and precious memory, and gathered, as by the call of a battle-trumpet, "all Israel, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath." As the ark was borne away, "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." At one point of the journey the oxen stumbled, and to save the ark from apparent danger, Uzza put forth his hand to keep it in its place. But the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, and there he died before God. Will man attempt to eke out the failing strength of Omnipotence? Doth it become us to watch the stars lest they fall, or to open the clouds at dawn lest the sun should miss his way? Shall we appoint ourselves the special guardians of the truth, and surround it with our defences, lest God should have no foothold on his own earth? God is not to be worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything,—“I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness

thereof." We have written books, and endowed communities, and passed Acts of Parliament, to keep steady the ark of God. Can we wonder that there are so many dead men, who have a name, indeed, to live, but in reality are plucked up by the roots? Sympathy without meddlesomeness, reverence without self-exaggeration, willingness to help without obtrusion of service,—Lord, with this spirit baptize us every one in the pitifulness of thy great mercy!

Coming to still more closely practical applications. Here and there in the course of the study we have indicated one or two modern bearings of the subject, which admit of obvious amplification. Let us look at one or two others.

The Israelites had a *visible* symbol of the Divine presence so long as they retained the ark in their midst. It was something to look at,—something for the heart to stay itself upon in the time of fear and trouble. But look at our own case. Are we not left without a centre that can be seen, and without a locality sanctified above all other places? We are truly in a great wilderness, but to what shrine can we point men when they mock our faith, and foretell a disastrous end to our pilgrimage? Sometimes, indeed, we find our hearts in a mood of intense longing for the days that are gone; they live backward through the many and cloudy yesterdays until they come upon the exciting times when God spake, as it were, face to face with his loved ones; when the guiding pillar went before the host day and night; when the ark was the signal of movement and the pledge of security; when the "fourth like unto the Son of man" walked in the burning fiery furnace with the faithful, and when the Son of God took little children in his arms and blessed them. To have lived then! To have had the eye filled with his beauty and the ear satisfied with the music of his sweet voice! To have touched the hem of his garment, to have stood within his shadow, to have plucked and kept for ever some poor flower of the meadow pressed by his feet,—to have seen *something* that was his! So yearns the heart in tender wish and sad regret. And to the world we seem to have nothing. The rain is not ours, for it falleth on the just and on the unjust; the sun is not ours, for it shineth on the evil and on the good. We look into the great

voids of space, but no image makes us glad. And there is no rod in our hand with which we can make scoffers afraid because of the wonders of the Lord. Have we not, then, fallen on mean times,—all poetry dead and gone, all music hushed for ever? To such questionings the Scriptures give a distinct reply. They tell us that ours are the brightest and noblest of all the days of time! “If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.” But the natural man seeth not this glory, neither can he know it, for it is spiritually discerned. “And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” Herein is that saying true, “The hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” The local has become the universal, and all things are inscribed—“Holy unto the Lord.”

That law and mercy are still at the heart of things is a truth which is acknowledged in some form even by others than Christian believers; but by Christian believers it ought to be ardently and gratefully maintained as at once the glory and the security of life.

*We know that there is law,—a law of continuity, for all things remain from one generation to another,—the stars do not burn themselves out with all their shining, nor is the sea dried up by the fire of the sun; a law of development, for life changes, improves, and matures itself, subtly but certainly; a law of trespass, for who can take fire into his bosom and not be burned, or trifle with poison and save his life? We know that there is law round about us, and high above us. What is it that causes ambition to break its billows into harmless foam upon the eternal rocks of Truth and Right? What is it that drives the diviners mad when they seek to misread the writing or forge the signature of God? What is it that throws down the half-built tower,*

whose summits were to have reached the stars? We are shut in, watched, ruled; and yet we see no Hand moving amongst our affairs. We make our plans, and our programmes read like music; but lo, we never enter the City that lured us, or get near the Tree whose fruit was to have made us wise. Wickedness swells with rage, and comes against the righteous in the fury of its strength; and lo, it staggers, and moans, and dies. The winds blow high and the clouds shut out the light, yet no star is lost, nor is any planet-ship wrecked in the wild storm. If we should fear that some loss may have happened in that upper sea, all the stars quiet us with the words, "Do thyself no harm, we are all here." There must be some meaning in all this,—in this infinite order, this calm profound which underlies the storm, this vengeance that consumes, this life that cannot die! What is the secret? Can any man name the spell, so baleful yet so gentle? Do not mock us with a word that we shall instantly feel to be hollow and untrue. Speak to us a word that shall, at all events, have a sound of reality in it,—mysterious as if it came up from Eternity, sympathetic as if it issued from a Heart of love. "But the temple of God was opened in heaven, and THERE WAS SEEN IN HIS TEMPLE THE ARK OF HIS TESTAMENT."

*We know that there is mercy;*—mercy in the very "process of the suns," for time turns many a bitter pain into a hallowed recollection, and wounds thought to be incurable have been staunched and healed,—mercy in the gifts of nature, for in bread there is sweetness, and the meadow and the garden are full of pleasantness,—mercy in social life, for sympathy puts our misery to sleep, and friendship revives our drooping strength,—mercy in returning slumber, and mercy in the peacefulness of our awaking;—minor mercies, all of them, leading, star-like, to a larger love,—leading to Bethlehem, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, and there merging their secondary rays in the ineffable light, the infinite glory out of which they came. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." "According to his mercy hath he saved us." There are times in our life when the memory of sin is so vivid, and its burden so grievous, that one cry only can express our necessity and our pain, our self-helplessness and our hope—"God be merciful to me a sinner";

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." It is at such times that we feel the power of words like these, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin"; "There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." All the other mercies that have been softening and beautifying our life, say to us in pleading tones, "If *we* have thus quieted your fears, and set a lamp for you in the time of darkness; if *we* have found for you unexpected help, and surprised you with unlooked-for gladness, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God:" If you would see Mercy written in largest letters, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"; if you would see Mercy in its sublimest attitude, look upon the uplifted dying Son of God; if you would hear Mercy's sweetest, gentlest tone, hear it as Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." What is the meaning of all the mercy which comes down upon our weary life? Is it a transient shower? Are the influences that quicken and bless us merely fugitive and accidental? Was the Cross the culmination of a rude tragedy? What does Mercy mean? Is it a mere sentiment? Is it a momentary suspension of discipline? Or is it Law in its highest mood? Is it Righteousness weeping? Is it Majesty bowing down from the heavens that it may find the lost? Hear the answer which alone satisfies the judgment and the heart—"The temple of God was opened in heaven, and THERE WAS SEEN IN HIS TEMPLE THE ARK OF HIS TESTAMENT."

And yet we are not left without a visible sign of God's presence. So long as we have the Bible we have the Ark of the Covenant. The most terrible yet the most gentle of all books is the Bible! Law is in it, and Mercy. It plagues the house, or blesses it, as the house of Obed-edom was blessed when he received the ark of the Lord into his dwelling. It throws down the Dagon of false worship, of dishonest trade, of false appearances. Yet how it overflows with mercy, and promise, and hope! It is like a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. It is quiet as a

green pasture in the summer noon. It is as a gentle rain on the tender herb, and as showers of blessing on the fainting field. Yet what a sword it is, and how like a fire it burns ! Let the bad man look into it for a text with which to sanctify his meanness or falsehood, and it will scorch him with intolerable heat ! Let the penitent look into it that he may know how to return unto the Lord, and it will glow with welcomes and benedictions ! Let a man fall upon it, and he will be broken ; let it fall upon a man, and it will grind him to powder ! Verily this book is the Ark of the Testimony. The Babylonian may burn the book, but he cannot destroy the Revelation. The infidel may take the book in some controversial war, but it will trouble him until it be released and sent away in honour. Like the Son of man, it is here, yet it is in heaven. It fears not them that kill the body. Fire will not consume it, nor will the sea hold it in prison. Its name is Wonderful, and the government is on its shoulder. "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and in his temple was seen the ark of his testament."

## Exodus xxv.-xxvii.

The two chief objects within the Court were the Brazen Altar and the Tabernacle. Sacrificial worship was old, but the local Sanctuary was quite new. The Tabernacle is most frequently called the Tabernacle of the Congregation. A better rendering is supposed to be, "The Tent of Meeting." The Tabernacle was also called "The Tent of the Testimony," in allusion to the fact that it was the depository of the Tables of the Law. The highest meaning of the structure was expressed by the Ark, which symbolised the constant presence of Jehovah. *The Speaker's Commentary* says: "We may regard the sacred contents of the Tabernacle as figuring what was peculiar to the Covenant of which Moses was the Mediator, the closer union of God with Israel, and their consequent election as 'a kingdom of priests, an holy nation': while the Brazen Altar in the Court not only bore witness for the old sacrificial worship by which the Patriarchs had drawn nigh to God, but formed an essential part of the Sanctuary, signifying by its now more fully developed system of sacrifices in connection with the Tabernacle those ideas of Sin and Atonement which were first distinctly brought out by the revelation of the Law and the sanctification of the nation." In the Ark there was no image or symbol of God. The Ark of the Covenant was never carried in a ceremonial procession. In all important particulars it differed from Egyptian shrines. When the Tabernacle was pitched the Ark was kept in solemn darkness. The staves were to remain always in the rings, whether the Ark was in motion or at rest, that there might never at any time be a necessity for touching the Ark itself or even the rings (2 Sam. vi. 6, 7). "The cherubims were not to be detached images, made separately and then fastened to the mercy seat, but to be formed out of the same mass of gold with the mercy seat, and so to be part and parcel of it." The Holy of Holies was a square of fifteen feet, and the Holy place an oblong thirty feet by fifteen. So far as known, "horns" were peculiar to Israelite altars.

## THE TABERNACLE.

THE specification for the building of the tabernacle purports to be Divinely dictated. We can form some idea of the validity of such a claim, for we have the test of creation by which to try it. We can soon find out discrepancies, and say whether this is God's work or an artificer's. A revelation which bounds itself by the narrow limits of an architect's instruction admits of

very close inquiry. Creation is too vast for criticism, but a tabernacle invites it. Let us, then, see how the case stands,—whether God is equal to himself, whether the God of the opening chapters of Genesis is the God of the mount upon which, according to this claim, the tabernacle was Divinely outlined in expressive cloud. Note, at the very outset, that the account of making the tabernacle occupies far more space than the history of the creation of the heavens and the earth. We soon read through what is given of the history of creation, but how long we have had to travel through this region of architectural cloud. It seemed as if the story would never end. This is a remarkable corroboration of the authenticity of both accounts. A long account of creation would have been impossible, presuming the creation to be the embodiment and form of the Divine word executed without human assistance. That account could not have been long. When there is nothing, so to say, between God's word and God's deed, there is no history that can be recorded. The history must write itself in the infinite unfoldment of those germs, or of that germ with which creation began. A short account of the tabernacle would have been impossible, presuming that all the skins, colours, spices, rings, staves, figures, dishes, spoons, bowls, candlesticks, knobs, flowers, lamps, snuffers, and curtains, were Divinely described; that every tache, loop, hook, tenon, and socket was on a Divine plan, and that human ingenuity had nothing whatever to do with a structure which in its exquisite fashioning was more a thought than a thing. So far, the God of Genesis is the God of Exodus: a subtle and massive harmony unites the accounts, and a common signature authenticates the marvellous relation. When God said, "Let there be light," he spake, and it was done. There is no history to write, the light is its own history. Men are reading it still, and still the reading comes in larger letters, in more luminous illustration. When God prescribed lamps for the tabernacle he had to detail the form of the candlesticks, and to prescribe pure olive oil, that the lamp might always burn. You require more space in which to relate the making of a lamp than in which to tell of the creation of the light; you spend more time in instructing a little child than in giving commands to an army. God challenged Job along this very line. Said he, "Where wast thou when I laid

the foundations of the earth?" There was no Job between the Creator and the creation; no Moses writing swiftly words Divine that had to be embodied at the foot of the hill. "Where is the way where light dwelleth; and as for darkness, which is the place thereof?" Mark well, therefore, the contrast of the accounts, and the obvious reason for the amazing difference.

The next point of observation relates to the completeness of the specification as corresponding with the completeness of creation. Lay the finger upon one halting line and prove that the Divine Architect was weak in thought or utterance at this point or at that. Find a gap in the statement and say, "He forgot at this point a small loop, or tache, or ouche, and I, his listener, Moses, must fill in what he left out." We do not know the meaning of great Gospel words until we read our way up to them through all the introduction of the initial covenants. We read backwards, and thus read ourselves out at the lower end of things, instead of reading in the order of the Divine evolution and progress, upward from height to height, until speech becomes useless, and silence must be called in to complete the ineffable eloquence. Could there have been more care in the construction of a heaven than is shown, even upon the page, without going into the question of inspiration, in the building of a tabernacle? Is it not also the same in such little parts of creation as are known to us? There is everywhere a wonderful completeness of purpose. God has set in his creation working forces, daily ministries. Nature is never done. When she sleeps she moves; she travels night and day; her force is in very deed persistent. So we might, by a narrow criticism, charge nature here and there with want of completeness; but it would be as unjust to seize the blade from the ear, and, plucking these, say, "Here we have sign and proof of incompleteness." We protest against that cruelty and simple injustice. There may be a completeness of purpose when there has not yet been time for a completeness of execution. But in the purpose of this greater tabernacle—creation—there is the same completeness that there is in the specification of this beauteous house which the Lord appointed to be built in the grim wilderness.

Consider, too, that the temporary character of the tabernacle was no excuse for inferior work. The tabernacle, as such, would

be but for a brief time. Why not hasten its construction—invent some rough thing that would do for the immediate occasion? Why, were it made to be taken up to heaven for the service of the angels it could not be wrought out with a tenderer delicacy, with a minuter diligence, as to detail and beauty. But to God everything is temporary. The creation is but for a day. It is we who are confused by distinction as between time and eternity. There is no time to God; there is no eternity to God. Eternity can be spelled; eternity can in some dumb way be imagined and symbolised in innumerable ciphers multiplied innumerable times by themselves till the mind thinks it can begin eternity. To God there is no such reasoning. When, therefore, we speak of lavishing such care upon a tabernacle, we mistake the infinity and beneficence of God. It is like him to bestow as great care upon the ephemera that die in the sun-beam as upon the seraphim that have burned these countless ages beside the eternal throne. We must not allow our ignorance, incompleteness, and confusedness of mind to interfere with the interpretation of these ineffable mysteries. But the tabernacle was built for eternity. So again and again we stumble, like those who are blind, who are vainly trying to pick their way through stony and dangerous places. The tabernacle was eternity let down—an incarnation, so to say, of eternity, as a man shall one day be an incarnation of God. We mistake the occasion utterly. We fall out of the pomp of its music and the grandeur of its majesty by looking at the thing, and supposing that the merely visible object, how lustrous and tender in beauty soever, is the tabernacle. The tabernacle is within the tabernacle, the Bible is within the Bible, the man is within the man. The tabernacle in the wilderness represented eternal thoughts, eternal purposes of love. Everything is built for eternity: every insect, every dog, every leaf—so frail, withering in its blooming. God builds for eternity in the thought, and in the connection, and in the relation of the thing which is builded. See how profound our iniquity in committing murder anywhere. “Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal.” It is one life, one property, a sublime unity of idea, and thought, and purpose. Do not segregate your life, or universe, and attempt a classification which will only separate into unholy solitude what was meant by

the Divine mind to cohere in indivisible unity. We were built for eternity. Can God build for less time? Nothing is lost. The greatest of economists is God. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered"; "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." When we speak about the temporary, we know not what we say; or we justly use that word, for the sake of convenience, as expressive of uses which themselves perish in their own action. But, profoundly and vitally viewed, even affliction is part of heaven; our sorrows are the beginning, if rightly accepted and sanctified, of our supremest bliss.

Mark, too, how wonderfully the tabernacle and the human frame correspond in perfection of detail and sublimity of purpose. It is not difficult to believe that he who made the tabernacle made Adam. The tabernacle grows before our eyes and Adam is growing still. The life which God is making is Man. Do not impoverish the mind and deplete the heart of all Divine elements and suggestions by supposing that God is a toymaker. God's purpose is one, and he is still engaged in fashioning man in his own image and likeness, and he will complete the duplicate. We must not fix our mind upon our mutilated selves, and, by finding disease, and malformation, and infirmity, and incongruity, charge the Maker with these misadventures. We must judge the Divine purpose in the one case with the Divine purpose in the other. I am aware that there are a few men who have—from my point of view blasphemously—charged the Divine work, as we regard it, in creation with imperfection. There have not been wanting daring men, having great courage on paper and great dauntlessness in privacy and concealment, and who have lived themselves into a well-remunerated, respectable obscurity, who have said that the human eye is not ideally perfect. So we do not speak in ignorance of the cross-line of thinking which seeks to interrupt the progress of Christian science and philosophy. Is there not a lamp also within the human tabernacle—a lamp that burns always, a lamp we did not light, a lamp trimmed by the hand Divine, a lamp of reason, a lamp of conscience, a lamp that sheds its light when the darkness without us is gathered up into one intense and all-obstructing night? and are there not parables in nature which help us to believe that this lamp, though it

apparently flicker—yea, though it apparently vanish—shall yet throw radiance upon heavenly scenes, and burn synchronously with the glory of God's own life? You say, "Look at old age and observe how the mind seems to waver, and halt, and become dim and paralysed, and how it seems to expire like a spark." No, as well say, "Look at the weary man at night-time, his eyelids heavy, his memory confused, his faculties apparently paralysed, or wholly reluctant to respond to every appeal addressed to them; behold how the body outlives and outweighs the boasted mind." No, let him sleep; in the morning he will be young again. Sleep has its ministry as well as wakefulness. God giveth his beloved sleep. So we may by many a natural parable find no difficulty in working ourselves up to contemplations that fill us with ecstasy, religious and sublime, as we call ourselves "heirs of immortality."

Did not Moses make the tabernacle? Yes; but who made Moses? That is the question which has never yet been answered. Change the terms as you please, that inquiry always starts up as the unanswerable demand. Your hand carved the marble, but who carved the hand? Singular, if the marble was carved, but the hand carved itself. Your tongue uttered the eloquence, but who made man's mouth? Who set within him a fountain of speech? Your mind planned the cathedral, but who planned the mind? It would have been more difficult to believe—infinity more difficult to believe—that the mind made itself than that the cathedral fashioned its own symmetry and roofed in its own inner music and meaning.

Thus perusing the specification for the building of the tabernacle, and reading the account of the creation of the heavens, and of the earth, and of man, I find between them a congruity self-confirming, and filled with infinite comfort to the heart that yearns studiously over the inspired page in hope of finding the footprints of God. The living Christian Church is more marvellous than the tabernacle in this wilderness. The tabernacle was part of a development; the tabernacle was only one point in the history. We must judge things by their final purpose, their theological aspect and philosophy. What is the meaning of the

tabernacle?—the temple. What is the meaning of the temple?—the living Church. So we find rude altars thrown together by careless hands, symbolising worship addressed to the heavens; then the tabernacle; then the temple; then the living fellowship. Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost? Know ye not that there is a foundation laid in Zion, a corner stone, elect, precious; and that we are built upon it, living stones; and that God is shaping the tabernacle of humanity as he shaped the tabernacle in the wilderness? Know ye not that we are builded together a holy house unto the Lord? Arrest not, even in theory, the Divine progress. The line from the beginning up till now has taken one grand course. Nothing has strayed away and left the Divine sovereignty. The wrath of man is still in the Divine leash, and hell is no independent colony of the universe. There is one throne, one crown; one increasing purpose runs through all we know. We wait patiently for the Lord, and when he says from his throne what Christ said from the cross, "It is finished," then we may be invited to say, in the terms which God himself used when he viewed creation,—“Behold, it is very good.”

## Exodus xxviii.

### THE PRIEST AND HIS ROBES.

THE hand that sketched the architecture of the tabernacle is plainly visible here, for here we have the same regard for proportion, beauty, fitness, and detail. There are certain Divine ideas here which belong to all ages, and which subtly and with wondrous precision confirm the unity of the whole Biblical plan. There is here something infinitely more than ancient history. Christianity is here as certainly as the oak is in the acorn. Shall we slightly vary the figure and compare this statement to a bud ready to burst into the loveliest flower of the garden? Every detail is alive with suggestion. Beyond Aaron, above him, and round about him is Another, who is feebly adumbrated by this Divinely-attired priest.

We may perhaps collect most of the permanent doctrine of this chapter by indicating a few manifest parallels:—

The Jewish priesthood was Divinely instituted. So is the Christian ministry.

“And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (xxviii. 1).

Priesthood is a Divine creation. The priest himself is a Divine election. The whole idea of mediation is not human but Divine. Up to this time Moses had represented the Divine sovereignty and purpose; but now we are coming into more delicate divisions and distributions of human life and action, and another kind of man is needed in the unfoldment of that most intricate and pregnant of all germs—the unit which holds the mystery which we call human life. The priesthood is not to be humanly accounted for. The priesthood cannot be humanly sustained. A man would hesitate to go into this warfare at his own charges and for his own self-gratification, in proportion as he feels the agony of the service

that must be rendered. Who wants to stand before his fellow-men to speak precepts of virtue, and to call to a supernatural or highly spiritual life, when he knows that every word he speaks is stained by the very breath that utters it? Who cares, being a true-minded man, having some earnestness of purpose, and being anxious to be really healthy in soul, to stand before the people as a living contradiction, unable to touch the sublimity of any prayer he offers, falling infinitely below every exhortation which he urges upon the people? There is a mystery here. This arrangement is not to be accounted for in any off-handed manner. There is a spirit in man—an inspiration leading to office, duty, function, service,—a great marvel not to be trifled with. It is because such forces are behind men, and above them, and on either hand of them, that they go forward to be the offscouring of all people, to be contemned, and mocked, and rebuked, and reminded of the discrepancies which mar the poor union which ought to subsist between their work and themselves. We claim for the Christian ministry a distinctly Divine institution and a distinctly Divine inspiration day by day.

Then reading further on in the story we find that the Jewish priesthood had a double function. So has the Christian ministry.

“And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial” (xxviii. 12).

Is that all? Is there to be a merely external manifestation or testimony? Read the completing statement:—

“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart” (xxviii. 29).

Now the whole ministry is before us. “Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.” History shall not be forgotten, deliverances shall be held in perpetual remembrance; marvels of the Lord wrought yesterday shall be as the marvels wrought in the present hour. Then there shall be a tenderer representation;—the names shall be upon the heart. There shall be a ministry of love, a pleading of sympathy, an identification of the spirit of the man with all the difficulties and distresses of the people. Shoulder work: representing publicity, courage, strength, leadership,—shoulders to which men

may look as to strong towers; and then the delicate heart-work; the sweet sympathy, the paternal or fraternal interest in all that concerns the development, and culture, and completion of poor, shattered, struggling human life. It is nothing to bear upon the shoulder—that is a kind of burden-carrying, and there is a kind of applause immediately following the completion of any athletic task,—but who can tell the heart-work of the true mediator or minister of the new covenant? A man who enters into this work with his whole soul must live a life of singular tension and agony, otherwise he is but a shatterer of words; only his shoulder engaged in the function; his heart is at liberty to run after any vanity and court the applause of any foolish idolatry. We must look at ideals; we must fasten our attention upon the thing as God meant it to be, and taking the Divine meaning of the priesthood in the olden time and of the ministry of to-day, we have amongst us men who care for us, men with strong shoulders, tower-like men; sturdy, visible, valiant, dauntless men; men who can speak in the darkness and make their voices heard in the storm; men who know not the cloud of fear and who heed not the tempest of opposition. But we need in the same men other qualities, tenderer elements, more gracious and insinuating forces that find their way into our inmost experience, into our hearts' aching and sore necessity,—men who are taught of Heaven to speak a word in season to him that is weary; men who have the gift of consolation, who can lower the voice into a tender and helpful whisper, and who can bring all God's gospel to bear in gracious and healing application upon the wound which makes the heart sore. This is the ideal. That we do not rise to it may be a rebuke to ourselves, but it is no just criticism upon the Divine purpose. It is an ideal we should do much to sustain. We cannot tell what we owe to the men who teach us great doctrines, who pray off many a burden that strains our strength; who speak to us, even between the lines of their eloquence, things that help us to bear life's misery with a more cheerful courage. We do not know what is being done by ministry of a truly Christian type, whether in the pulpit, or in the school, or in the family, or in the market-place. No man can measure the full issue and outgoing of influence connected with the profound agonistic service on behalf of truth and humanity.

Still pursuing the story, we find that the Jewish priesthood was identified with the people. So is the Christian ministry.

"And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not" (xxviii. 33-35).

The meaning is that the people were to know what Aaron was about. He was to announce himself; every motion of the body was proved by a tinkling and chiming of the golden bells. Amid all the stir and rush and tumult of the day's engagement there came a sound—a sweet, mystic sound—of golden bells. What is the meaning?—The priest is interested for us; he is going into the holy place; he is about his sacred work; he is remembering us before God. The priest is not going into the holy place to perform any magical arts of his own, to make up some black art or mystery out of his own invention; he is not stealing away with shoes whose motion cannot be heard, or with garments that do not rustle. We are to know where he is, what he is doing. He cannot stir without our knowing it; the golden bells report the actions and movements of the priest. If those bells were quieted, and if Aaron stole about his work as if he were a sorcerer, or a magician, who had some little trick of his own to play, the penalty was death. If the bells were not heard, the priest must die. The priest is a public servant; he is not to be concealed behind a curtain working out some black craft or indulging in some Eleusinian mystery. He is a man of the people, he belongs to the people, he is the servant of the people; all that concerns the people he must represent. How completely does the idea of the Christian ministry fructify that seed-thought,—bring to sacred and gracious maturity the opening purpose of the loving Father! The minister belongs to the people. The minister is no conjuror. It is not only a mistake, but a wicked error to clothe the preacher, whoever he may be, with any superstitious quality or charm. We may be able to say—and must be,—“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” That is right; words of that import may be addressed to

every man who vindicates his ministerial vocation ; but the minister is the gathered-up people ; he represents the common wants of the day. When he folds his hands in public prayer it is that he may speak of the burden and stress of a thousand lives ; he must speak the language of the people ; there must be nothing whatever about his speech separating him from the great, deep currents of popular life, necessity, and heart-ache. The poorest hearer must feel as the preacher is speaking that the preacher is speaking of him, to him, for him, and is his greater self—his speaking self,—the tongue of the dumb, the eye of the blind, the completing life that takes up the meanest existence and runs it into spheral completeness and beauty. This is the ideal,—how far we fall short of it is another question. We are not now saying how far we meet the standard and satisfy it, we are asking, What is the standard ? and magnifying the grace of God in the development of spiritual education.

We find that the Jewish people had a Urim and a Thummim. So has the Christian Church.

“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim (literally translated : Light and Perfection) ; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord ” (xxviii. 30).

What the Urim and the Thummim actually were no man has been able to find out. Whether they were to be used for the purpose of ascertaining the Divine will in critical and perplexing circumstances has been a question which has excited devout attention ; but whatever the Urim and the Thummim were, there can be no doubt as to what our Urim and Thummim are. We are not left without light and perfection ; we are not destitute of means of discovering the Divine purpose in our life and progress. Our Urim and Thummim are the Old and New Testaments. Keep these in the heart ; be at home with them in all their wondrous variety of speech, of doctrine, of song, of inspiration, and of instruction of every kind ; and then you never can stray far from the path providential that makes its own course straight up to the God who started the mysterious outgoing. We have nothing to do with incantation ; we do not go to consult the witch of Endor, the sorcerer, or the conjuror ; we ask no questions at forbidden places. The whole life-course is mapped out in the Old

Testament and in the New. The Testaments are never to be separated; they are to be read together, they explain one another; torn asunder, they lose their unity and their music; brought together, you bring the flower to the root, you bring the noonday to the dawn, you unite things, forces, ministries that ought never to be dissevered. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Scripture given by inspiration is profitable for all the necessities of life. If we stray, it is not for want of light; if we persist in obeying our own perverted instincts and impulses, we must not be surprised that we end in the bog of despair or in the wilderness of destitution. Do not move without consulting the oracle Divine. Let our motto be, "To the law, and to the testimony," and what cannot be confirmed by the spirit of the book is unworthy to be admitted into our life as an inspiring and directing force.

We find that the Jewish arrangement had one supreme object. So has the Christian life.

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (xxviii. 36).

This motto is written in the book in large capitals. The dimmest eye can see the signet. What typography has done for the page the Holy Spirit is to do for the heart and life. There must be no mistake about the language of our prayer, endeavour, study, service, and aspiration. In the beginning they may be poor in expression, they may struggle and halt a good deal and bring upon themselves the vexation of a narrow and mocking criticism; but to the Divine eye they must be so ordered as to represent the purpose of holiness, the meaning of God-likeness. In our first, humblest, poorest prayer there must be the beginning, which, being developed in God's providence and grace, shall express the music of the eternal song. In our first Christian efforts there may be much that those who look on could easily condemn and easily minimise into something almost insignificant and trivial; but there must be in them that which is like the grain of mustard seed which God can recognise, and about which he will say, Let it grow in the right soil under the warm sun, let it be nourished and rocked by the breezes of heaven, and even that little thing shall become as a great and fruitful tree.

What, then, is the object of all this priesthood, all this ministry, church-building, and church-attendance? What is the mystery of it all? The answer is sublime; no man need blush for it; the object we have in view is HOLINESS TO THE LORD; and that is the meaning of every turn of the hand; that is what we want to write. You can mock us; we are making but poor writing of it; at present the work is done in a very feeble manner—none can know it so truly as those know it who are trying to carry it out. We know we expose ourselves to the contempt of the mocker, but if you ask us what we would accomplish, what is the goal towards which we are moving, we take up these words. We do not attempt to amend them; we cannot paint such beauty or add to the glory of such lustre; our motto, our wish, our prayer, our end is HOLINESS TO THE LORD. We are not fanatics; we know the spirit of reason; we pay homage at the altar of reason; we can think, compare; we can bring things together that are mutually related; we can construct arguments and examine evidences and witnesses, and if you ask us, as rational men—What would you be at? name your policy—this is it: that we may be holy unto the Lord. We would so live that everything within our sphere shall be inscribed with HOLINESS TO THE LORD—yea, even upon the bells of the horses would we write that sacred term, and not rest until the snuff-dishes of the sanctuary are made of pure gold, until every breath is an odour from heaven, every action of the human hand a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. This is our object: we do not disavow it, we do not speak of it in ambiguous terms; we would be holy unto the Lord.

And have we no ornaments? The ornament of the meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. And have we no garments of blue, and purple, and beautiful suggestiveness? We have garments of praise; we are clothed with the Lord Jesus. And have we no golden bells? We have the golden bells of holy actions. Our words are bells, our actions are bells, our purposes are bells; wherever we move our motion is thus understood to be a motion towards holy places, holy deeds, holy character. We are not ashamed of this object. We know what small words can be hurled against us by the mocker and the sneerer; but holiness is an object which can neither be in-

validated by argument nor forced down by violent assault; it stands like a mountain of the Lord's own setting, whose head is warmed with the sunshine of Heaven's eternal blessing. The priest has gone, Aaron has gone, all the beauteous robes have fallen away and are no longer needed; but they have only fallen off in the process of a philosophical as well as a Christian development. We need them no longer, because we have come into higher services and we represent more spiritual uses. There is a character that is far above rubies. There is a spirit which outshines the diamond. There is a holiness of which star and sun and unstained snow are but imperfect emblems. Do you see your calling then, brethren? There is no priest amongst us now. There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. We have a ministry—a human, brotherly ministry—men who explain to us as they may be enabled by the Holy Ghost the meaning of the Word Divine; men who exhort us, and comfort us, and do what they can to make us valiant in the day of danger, and serene in the hour of threatening and evil expectation. We bless God for them. We know their voices. We see God in them, above them, beyond them. They have what they have of treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power is of God. We are no more children, pleased with stones that are precious, and rubies that are lustrous, and bells that are resonant; we are no longer in that infantile place in God's creation. We have left the emblematic, the symbolic, the titular, and the initial, and now where are we? With Christ in the holy place, living in his Spirit, hearing his word, worshipping at his Cross, and looking straight up to him without a man between us. We are a royal generation, a holy priesthood; we are all kings and priests. The Aaronic line is to us extinct, for the Church of the Living God constitutes the priesthood of believers.

## Exodus xxix. 12.

"And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar."

### THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD.

**W**HAT a violent transition ! We have been reading, up to this account, language of a very different kind. We have been reading of gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, rams'-skins and badgers'-skins, and acacia wood ; we have been reading of oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense ; also of onyx, and all manner of precious stones, of rings of gold, of the cherub on the one end and the cherub on the other end of the mercy seat, and the cherubims stretching forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces looking one to another—and now, suddenly, violently, we are told to "take of the blood of the bullock." There has been no speech about blood hitherto. We have read of the garments of the priests, of the pomegranates, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem of the sacerdotal robe, and bells of gold between them round about ; we have read of the blue lace, and of the mitre, and of the embroidered fine linen ; but now we read of the bullock's blood—blood upon the horns of the altar.

"And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him : and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him (xxix. 21).

Sanctified by blood ! Hallowed by blood of beasts ! Have we fallen from some high level ? Are we now upon lines lying far below the altitude upon which our imagination has folded its mighty wings ? How has modern piety commented upon this

blood-shedding? In some such language as this:—"Is it to be believed that a God of love and pity would take delight in such offerings as are described in the ritual of the Jews? Is he a God taking delight in the shedding of blood, morning, noon, and night? Is that not a degrading view of God to think of him in any way participating in sacrifices so brutal and shocking? Ought we not to get rid of the word *blood*? Is it not a vulgar term? Does it not turn the mind in downward and debasing directions? Surely the mere reading of the ritual shocks the moral sense and distresses the imagination." So much for the spurious piety which has mistaken the point of view and utterly misinterpreted the whole thing. It is shocking to have to do with people who do not see the meanings of things, who continually make mistakes in the very act of priding themselves upon being correct. They want religion—but a certain kind and form of religion. They are shocked by the idea of idolatry, forgetting that they themselves are idolaters in worshipping only their own conceptions of what God requires, or might be supposed to require, at the hands of his creatures. The people who would get rid of the word *blood* would—though they do not see it—get rid of the word *sin*. They are not safe teachers; they are superficial commentators upon the dark mystery of human nature and the bright mystery of Divine love. My contention will be that without the word *blood*, as it is here found, the whole ritual would be a sham and a mockery, as without the sun the whole day would be dark and cold. But for the blood, the tabernacle would be an affair simply of filigree and upholstery,—a conception too pretty to be Divine, too mechanical to have any relation to the Infinite; this would be the frivolity of a god,—it is redeemed from frivolity by blood. Hitherto the people have been happily eager to give blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, and precious stones,—even a sardius, a topaz, a carbuncle, an emerald, a sapphire, a diamond, a ligure, an agate, an amethyst, a beryl, an onyx, a jasper;—"Take them all, with pleasure!" So you might, and miss the point Divine. All this initial contribution has a meaning far beyond. Having presented all these things—so beautiful, so rich, so valuable,—further claim is made upon the donors: now *yourselves*. That was the early and necessary method of spiritual education.

The method is now reversed ; but we must be just to history in not forcing open the pages that are closed ; we must patiently and critically read the exact line to which we have come in the light of its own time. Mark the Divine wisdom : "Make me a tabernacle." "With pleasure," said Israel, in the wilderness. "Give me gold and precious stones, purple, and scarlet, and blue, and fine twined linen." "Yes," was the gracious reply—"certainly." Does God want such decoration?—such gilding, and painting, and colouring? Not he—except educationally, preparatorily. The meaner gift having been laid down, and laid down with some grace of generosity, the great claim is asserted in some such words as these :—"You have given the donation, now give the *donor*." Many of us are pleased with the tabernacle as a beautiful creation ; so many of us are pleased with life as an opportunity of enjoyment, education, and progress, the reciprocation of courtesies, civilities which make life really worth living within a narrow sense. If we have advanced only so far, we have not begun to live. We do not know the meaning of life until we know the meaning of death. We have built a beautiful tabernacle ; we have spared nothing of purple and blue, and fine twined linen, and all manner of precious stones, and laces, and beautiful things ;—how is it that *he* does not come who alone can make the house livingly beautiful? Because the blood has not been shed. All this life-building is a trick, a gorgeous ceremonial, a subtle piece of self-adulation ; God will come by way of death, sacrifice, agony. Yes,—death. This is the hard lesson ; the preacher cannot teach it in words delicate enough, sufficiently pungent, graphic, palpitating with the blood of his own sacrifice. This is the reason that we have a tabernacle without a God : a beautifully-built creed without blood, or fire, or incense ; this is the reason that the tabernacle is rotting. The Church has lost—in proportion as it has lost the right conception of blood—the one thing for which it was created. Christianity is no longer an agony ; it is a controversy, a speculation, one philosophy amongst other philosophies ; but its specialty—its Cross—is lost. Until we believe this we shall die a base death—not a death that has life coming after it to seal it as a sacrifice—a death without a resurrection. We are shocked by the idea of blood. Some ministers are afraid of the term ; they speak of *love*, not of

blood,—as if blood did not include love and more: love at its highest point—the point of agony, sacrifice. So the church is empty, the altar is abandoned, the tabernacle is a beautiful nonentity, a marvel in upholstery,—a marvel in atheism. Churches can never live without the blood. We all know how easy it is to debase that term, to vulgarise it and make it shocking by narrow and imperfect interpretations. It requires but a dull fancy to turn that term to vulgar uses so as to offend the nostril and distress certain imperfectly trained faculties of our nature.

But we must ascend to heroic heights, and take heroic measures, and stand where base definitions can never come, and speak of blood shed before the foundation of the world—the platform of vulgarity, the world that has made vulgarity possible. This blood was shed before the world was made,—a Divine refinement, an infinite tabernacle in an infinite eternity. By whom are we to be led? by the people who are easily shocked? by people of perverted and enfeebled taste and faculty? by persons who have no broad conceptions—who are afraid that words may be mistaken?—or by another quality of soul? The one would lead us in the direction of small moralities, little marvels in behaviour, small successes in excellent behaviour which might be measured by a school prize. The other will lead us into prayer equal to violence that takes heaven's gate by storm, and into heroism that counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. The Church has outlived itself because it has lost the profound conception of God in its creation and purpose. Only a return to God's idea can mean a true revival of piety. A revival is not an excitement of emotion, a momentary influence operating upon our sentimental nature; a great revival—profound as truth, lofty as Divine perfectness, happy as the bliss of heaven,—can only come out of grand realisations of Divine ideas,—knowledge that does not sparkle and crackle in dying flame, but glows in eternal ardour. We can only live as we live in God.

You say that you object to the term *blood*. What do you mean by that term? There is your mistake. You see only the red stream, the panting, quaking beast that dies under its throat-wound. No wonder you are shocked. You are looking in the wrong direction,—rather you are not truly looking at all. The

ritual must be taken in its symbolic sense. What then does the shedding of blood signify?—death? No, there is no death in shedding of blood, as understood in its highest interpretation in connection with this old ritual. What then did the shedding of blood signify? It signified the giving of life;—the very opposite thought to that which ruled your thinking and debased your imagination. This is a symbolic act. The blood is taken and put upon the horns of the altar, and upon the garments of the priest, and upon the vessels of the sanctuary, and it is a blood of sprinkling by which the whole multitude is at least representatively sprinkled, and the meaning is we pour out our life in one libation of love; it is thine, thou Giver of all existence. If we have been looking down at some poor beast dying, no wonder our Christian thinking has been driven away into dark corners and unworthy refuges. We should have been looking in the other direction,—the outflowing blood and outflowing life; the man standing over the red stream saying, “Lord, this is what I would daily do; give back the life to the Lifegiver; have no life of my own, except as it is re-given to me by the God to whom I dedicate it.”

Looked at physically, the spectacle is revolting; looked at symbolically, it is full of poetry, theology, beneficence. It is the one thing we needed to express a feeling for which there was no adequate articulation. We have given the blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; we have not spared the precious cut stones, and the gold, and silver, and brass; but still we felt an aching as of a pain for which no words could be found. We were not satisfied after we had built the tabernacle, even according to the lines of the Divine specification; we walked around it, we ventured here and there to touch it with almost worshipping fingers; but still something was wanting; we knew not what it was,—it required the refinement of God to introduce the term *blood* into such eloquence and beauty so ineffable; but, having been introduced, our souls felt the completeness of the harmony; the measure was massive, solid, full, and we are resting in God’s arrangement. Have we not even now some experience of that kind? We feel that we have done much, and yet there is a twitch at the heart, which being interpreted means: You have not done the one thing which gives value and meaning to all the

other. What then is wanted?—blood. The blood is the life—not blood-letting in some brutal sense, but life-shedding, life-giving, life-worshipping,—every pulse bearing the legend—"I am not my own; I am bought with a price."

But was there not a burning, as well as a shedding of blood? There was. What does the burning symbolise? Destruction of the flesh. Fire is the true and never-failing disinfectant. Chemists have devised many disinfectants of more or less questionable efficacy and utility, but fire never fails. What does that smoking heap mean? It means that all about me that is fleshly, impure, earthly, unworthy is being consumed. We want such sanitary arrangements. This is the Divine sanitation,—not an offering of life and allowing the dead carcase to rot and scatter pestilence in the air; but a blood-oblation: the life given and the mean part handed over to fire to be turned into aspiration—the only form in which the flesh can pray.

In interpreting these ancient pages, events must never be judged out of their own time. We cannot understand the early books unless we exclude from our imagination every other book we have read. A great organist has said that, in coming to an instrument he has never tried, his first object is to forget every organ he has previously played upon; the new instrument must stand upon its own merits and neither be elevated nor depressed by memories connected with other instruments. It is even so we must read the early books of the Bible. When we read Genesis we must not know that Exodus was ever written; when we read Exodus we must have no idea that it is followed by Leviticus. Only in this way can we be just to the Divine method of revelation and to God's way of educating the human family. We shall thus be for the moment shocked by this word *blood*. It comes in amidst such a blaze of jewellery and such a consciousness of wealth in all directions which import civilisation, culture, luxury, even to redundancy.

Whilst we have to read an event in the light of its own time, we ought not to suppose that any event is final. The caution must be exercised at the one end as certainly as at the other. We are not, therefore, yet prepared for final judgments because we have not the complete evidence before us. We must read on, and on, patiently, carefully, with all the restfulness of a judicial criticism;

and we must add to that the singular power which is called imagination,—not as some fancy it: a base faculty that fancies things that have no existence, but the higher faculty that multiplies, that brings things into aggregation, that catches the projections of shadow and suggestive meaning amounting to an unwritten Apocalypse of viols and trumpets, and lightnings and thunderings, and beasts joining and swelling the hallelujahs of the heavens.

To what then does this “blood” point? It points, like John the Baptist, to One who is walking, and it says, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” He could not have been slain openly one day sooner. It is in vain for us to ask why Jesus Christ did not come in Exodus or Leviticus. We must leave some room for God in his own universe. We must rest in the faith that there is an appointed time to man, to God, to the kingdom Divine, to the truth infinite, for revelation, incarnation, operation. The world needed all its school days to prepare for this high learning. Now the blood of no bullock is to be shed, or goat, or lamb; no ritual is to be performed. There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. “Ye are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” It is now our blood that has to be poured out; in other words, our life that has to be shed in daily libation. The blood of Atonement has been shed by the Son of God. He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world,—a great mystery because a great love; a great agony because of great sin; a great death—the greatest of deaths,—yea, the death of the Son of God. In order that we might never penally die, we are to die in Christ and to rise in Christ. If I cannot understand the Atonement, I cannot understand the apostacy; if I do not understand God, it is because I do not understand myself. If I could understand the sin, I could understand the mercy. It is not for me yet to understand: my attitude is this—none happier can I have till the vail drops and the clouds depart—“Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.”

## Exodus xxix., xxx.

### THE PRIEST AND HIS CONSECRATION.

WE now study the consecration of the priest himself. Strange if God has constructed a tabernacle, given a specification for an ark, detailed the shape and colour of the priestly robes, and omitted to say anything about the priest himself. Let us see how the case stands both historically and spiritually.

We have already seen that the priest did not officially appoint himself; in no sense did he rush into the priest's office; nay, more, at the very time of his appointment to the sacerdotal function he was absolutely unaware that the dignity was about to be conferred upon him. This we saw in our comment upon the twenty-eighth chapter and the first verse: "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." His sons were also appointed to the same high dignity. There is nothing in this appointment that should startle students of history. It is an appointment which is taking place every day in every circle and department of progressive human life. God appoints all men to their places. The conferring of honour is an expression of the Divine sovereignty. We do not know for what purpose we have come into the world until that purpose is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. That we have come for some purpose is a thought which should make us sober, watchful, expectant; that should touch our every thought with the solemnity and urgency of prayer. The uppermost question should be, "Lord, what was I made for? What is the fire which burns upon the altar of my life?" You, it may be, have been called to be great intercessors, having power Divinely given to hold the Almighty in long converse about human life, human sin,

and human destiny, and may have the wondrous faculty which is best expressed to the dulness of our minds by the act of turning back the Divine purpose, when it is one of destruction, and begetting in the Divine mind a purpose of clemency and mercy. These things are of course, in the very necessity of the Deity; but our relation to them is sometimes best expressed by an accommodation of language which permits the Almighty to be represented as if he had been overthrown by human plea, and turned to more compassionate moods by human intercession. Others have been consecrated poets, painters, preachers, tradesmen; but every man is consecrated in the Divine purpose. We can have nothing common or unclean; nothing secular; nothing that is disregarded by the Almighty. If he thought it worth while to make us, he suffers no loss of dignity by appointing us, directing us, taking care of the life which he filled with the pulses of eternity. How we fall into recklessness, and fear, and many a snare by the evil thought that the Almighty had no purpose in making us, has never spoken of us in the radiant cloud which he has gathered around him like the walls of a sanctuary, but has left us poor, blind, homeless orphans without centre, outside the infinite gravitation which binds the universe to his heart. You mock God by such wildness of conception. He gathereth the lambs in his bosom. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. There are vessels of honour and vessels of inferiority, but the great house is our Father's, and every one of us has a place in it and an appointment to fulfil, and blessed is he who with loving obedience and consent falls into the rhythm of the Divine movement, singing morning, noon, and night, "Not my will, but thine be done." Then is life a revolution round the eternal throne, and every life an opportunity for reflecting the Divine lustre upon lives that may be below it. There is a heredity of a spiritual kind, a succession priestly, artistic, philanthropic, evangelistic. Men are set in bands, classes, groups,—why not say they are fashioned into constellations?—every great grouping of stellar light and beauty having its appointed place, and though all the constellations fly so fast their wings never overlap, and there is no tumult in the infinite hurrying. We are called to this place because to this faith. To realise it is to be calm · to seize that doctrine is to have bread to eat at all seasons,

and a vision of heaven even when the darkness of the night is sevenfold.

A very solemn view of life is presented by this incident. Aaron was unaware what was passing in the cloud. Our life is being secretly planned for us. Up in the cloud the Lord is talking about his children on the earth. He is naming them by name, appointing coats and garments, ephods, crowns, mitres, and functions of usefulness and dignity for them. We cannot hear the converse, but we are the subjects of the marvellous talk. What is to become of the old man, and the little child, and the traveller whose journey will be done to-morrow, and the warrior who lifts his great sword for the last stroke in the Master's name? We are being spoken of. Said One: "I go to prepare a place for you." God would seem to have but one thought: love to man, redemption of the creature who bears his likeness. Wait until you get the message from the mount. We may begin to feel, before we hear the actual words, that we are about to be called to some great destiny,—there are premonitions. Some of us have experienced almost miracles of prescience; we have felt the inspiration before it has fully seized us. Blessed are those servants who rise morning by morning expecting the day's message for the day's own work. Let your attitude be one of expectancy, and let the expectancy be like a prayer that pierces without violating the sacred cloud.

Notice, in the next place, the most important thought that has yet come before us. The consecration of the priest is identified with what we may imperfectly describe as the creation of sin. Mark, not the commission of sin—with that we have been but too familiar;—but its Divine creation. That is a startling term, but my meaning of it is justified by the Bible itself. A time had come in human history when actions had to be spiritually defined, classified, and set in a new relation towards the personality and government of God. This will throw light upon many a mystery in the book of Genesis. In Genesis there was no sin as we now understand that pregnant term. That is a key to the Divine administration in the book of Genesis. Murder in the days of Cain and murder after the giving of the law were two different things. If we omit to use that all-opening key we shall feel ourselves in the book of Genesis in the midst of confusion which

defies settlement into order. You blame Jacob for coveting the birthright of Esau, forgetting that there was no covetousness when Jacob did so. Covetousness, in the now legal sense of the term, was an after-creation. We must not take back with us sentiment which has been established and cultivated by the law into the book of Genesis, and judge antediluvian and patriarchal times by a standard of which they knew nothing. To get a right seizure of the genius of the book of Genesis, you must in mind detach that book from all the other books, and read only according to the immediate light of the particular time. It was bad for Cain to commit murder—it would be unpardonable for us to commit it. God did not treat the murderer Cain as he would treat a murderer of the present day. What was punished in those ancient times was the broad and vulgar crime about whose horribleness there could be no doubt, and the punishment was as broad as the crime. The two must be studied in their relation and harmony. How did God punish antediluvian and patriarchal crime? By floods of water, by tempests of fire. Wondrous is the adjustment of the answer to the aggravation! Deceit, covetousness, self-seeking, meanness, lying, and many other vices, had not in the book of Genesis been defined, and consequently were looked upon in many cases as necessary weapons of defence. The word *kill* would, in its highest sense, have to be explained to the persons to whom it was addressed. The word *lying* or *falsehood* would have to be expatiated upon and made clear, by expository and illustrative remark, to the individuals who first heard the word. They lied that they might win; they employed deceit as they would employ a weapon of defence, or an instrument of assault,—a shield, or a spear. There is what may be called a chronological morality in the sense which is now present to our minds: hence the wondrous speech of Christ—"It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you,"—that is the sum total of my meaning. After this interview upon the mountain, all human actions received a new definition. The spiritual element was introduced. Murder, incest, violence, rudeness of behaviour—all these are left behind among the vulgarities of the age to which they first belonged. But now we begin to come into the heart, into the innermost places of the

thought,—yea, before the thought has shaped itself into expressibleness, criticism Divine is brought to bear upon it, and so brought that the trembling, fearing heart exclaims, “Thy word is exceeding powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow.” This is the meaning of development. That great process can never be got rid of; it is the central line in revelation as it is in nature. The apostolic argument goes wholly in this direction. Look at Romans iv. 15 :—“Where no law is, there is no transgression.” Where was the law in many a case which has startled and confounded us in the book of Genesis? There was no law as that term is now understood. With this view accords the testimony of 1 John iii. 4 :—“Sin is the transgression of the law.” But the Apostle Paul has just said, “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” See how this is confirmed by Romans iii. 20 :—“By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The most distinctively illustrative statement upon the matter is made by the Apostle Paul in Romans vii. 7—this expresses the whole thought :—“I had not known sin, but by the law : for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” So then the law created sin in its legal and spiritual sense. Until the law is revealed to a man he does not know precisely what he is doing in the judgment of God. He must learn what life is ; he must have revelations addressed to him upon morality, even though he be prepared to resent the notion of revelation upon transcendental spiritual realities.

Mark how the history accumulates, how grandly it masses itself into unity and significance. The moment when sin was enlarged and defined and made matter of law, a new agency was needed. Up to this time there has been no priest, as that term is historically understood. There was a marvellous Figure, half-God, half-man, a Symbol rather than a person, that seemed to point to mysteries yet to be revealed—himself the greatest of mysteries, for that Melchisedec had no beginning and no end, neither father nor mother, neither beginning of days nor end of life. But now we come into concrete instances, and out of our own ranks is a man selected who was to be separate from us legally and functionally for ever. Is this poetry to be lost upon us? Is this sublime development to draw up out of our view

without leaving its appropriate impression, infinite in meaning and in solemnity? These are the lines which prove the inspiration of the Scriptures. A new definition of life, action or conduct, is made up in the mount, and let us suppose there is no action upon the earth to correspond with it, not "What an oversight!" but "What an offence!" would then be our exclamation. But as God becomes narrower in his judgments, more penetrating, more critical, more discriminating, he adapts himself to the new morality, the more spiritual conception and criticism of conduct. Grace and Law were both in the mount,—even Moses and the Lamb were both there! Then came the mystery of sacrifice,—blood, expiation, atonement, daily sacrifice, continual shedding of blood, piercing criticism into every action of the human life,—a great tumult, an infinite mystery charged with intolerable pain.

*Before* the law was made known to the people the atonement was provided for sin. Behold, then, the goodness of God! Whilst the people were at the base of the mountain, not knowing what was being done, an atonement was being provided for the sin which would follow upon a revelation of the more critical and spiritual law. Is there any line in all the holy testimony which enlarges this thought and glorifies it? Verily there is: "The Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world." The Atonement was not an after-thought, a mere expedient devised in reply to a set of circumstances which the Divine omniscience had not foreseen. Before the sin was committed, the Cross was erected; before the sinner had defied his Maker, his Maker had become the sinner's Saviour. Who can outrun the love of God? "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." Sin is not an accident—something that has come into the universe without being expected. It was foreseen from the beginning; Grace was ahead of it, and God will overthrow it. Instead of being surprised into despair by our sin, let us be surprised into praise by God's prevenient love.

In the Christian dispensation both the law and the priesthood are abolished. Sinai is but a hill left for the tourist, as the brazen serpent is but Nehushtan,—a piece of brass intended to be used for common purposes, and the mantle of Elijah is now

but a perished rag. We have come to another point in the Divine development of events ; now we have new heavens and a new earth. "What then ? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid." "We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." That is the Christian position. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We, too, have a Divinely-appointed Priest—"No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that was called of God, as was Aaron ; so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an highpriest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." There is one Mediator between God and man. The Aaronic thought is completed in the Christly intercession. We now come not to man, but to God through the appointed way. Jesus Christ is Priest, Jesus Christ is Advocate. "This Man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." From the beginning to the end the line is one—heightening, broadening, glorifying, until it is lost in the ineffable lustre of the upper kingdoms.

## Exodus xxxi. 1-11.

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2. See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah :
3. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,
4. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,
5. And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.
6. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan : and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee ;
7. The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle,
8. And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,
9. And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,
10. And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,
11. And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place : according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

### THE METHOD OF PROVIDENCE:

**W**E must never forget that all these instructions were given in a mountain and were to be carried out in a wilderness. These circumstances turn their execution into a Divine miracle. In the interpretation of the sacred record, bear in mind the circumstances. If you lose sight of the wilderness, you will not see the tabernacle ; yea, though its glory—a tender glory of beauty—may gleam upon you and excite your imagination. If you detach the tabernacle from the sandy and dreary wilderness, you will fail to see all the mystery of light. The things belong to one another for instructive purposes. We do not let God have a fair place for building. We have turned the whole earth into wilderness, so that if he would build at all he must build under circumstances which act as a definite foil to every touch of beauty and every line of light. Yet God will build in the wilderness as

if it were a heaven. He will not be discouraged by the stones, the sands, the bleak surroundings. We could not work under such conditions; we should complain of the environment, asking with bitterness of tone, "Who can work in a place so dreary? and what is the reward for putting up in the wilderness a thing fit for the streets of the golden Jerusalem?" God builds everything with an eye to beauty. When he rounded off the earth and sent it flying in its appointed circuit, he blessed the little thing as a man might bless his child, and said with infinite pathos, "It is very good." Now that he comes to build upon it, we have spoiled it altogether, and if he were less than God he could not lay one stone upon another on a foundation so debased and spoiled as is now the earth under our devastating and unsparing hand. Behold, as elsewhere and everywhere, the tender goodness of God! He lets down his best things upon the earth as if it were a fit receiving-house,—“He spared not his own Son.” Having sent down law and priesthood, tabernacle, and ark, and prophet, and a long line of angel-visitants with messages struck in every key of eloquence, last of all he sent his Son. So there must be something in this little night-world we have never seen; there must be in the substance of things verily a mystery which, whilst it is acknowledged by philosophy, is known and esteemed infinitely by its Creator. The philosophers are quite right when they cannot see in what they term “phenomena” any reason for the wondrous revelation of Christ as the heart and image of God. There is nothing in phenomena worthy of the Cross, or fully explanatory of it; but God sees the heart of things, the innermost enfoldment, the *sanctum sanctorum*,—that entity, that pulse, which is hidden from every created eye. Instead, therefore, of finding the revelation of the Gospel to be in excess of the phenomena, I will go further and say that God must find his own balance; he must put in the one scale what is equal to the other, and doing so, he does not degrade himself—he lifts up the work of his hands and the purpose of his heart.

God would have everything built beautifully. What an image of beauty have we seen this tabernacle to be through and through, flushed with colours we have never seen, and bright with lights that could not show themselves fully in the murkiness of this air! He would make us more beautiful than our dwelling-place. He

would not have the house more valuable than the tenant. He did not mean the worshipper to be less than the tabernacle which he set up for worship. Are we living the beautiful life—the life solemn with sweet harmonies, broad in its generous purpose, noble in the sublimity of its prayer, like God in the perpetual sacrifice of its life? To answer such questions in the affirmative, or in any tone hinting positiveness, is to be building a life which will outshine the tabernacle, though it were outlined by the very finger of God.

Not only will God build everything beautifully; his purpose is to have everything built for religious uses. He will not have mere beauty of form, for in the creation of form he may perpetrate an irony that would distress his own heart. His meaning is that the form shall help the thought, that images appealing to the eye shall also touch the imagination and graciously affect the whole spirit, and subdue into tender obedience and worship the soul and heart of man. What can be more ironical—and therefore to the spiritual mind more distressful—than for the stone church to be more beautiful than the living temple?—an organ out-singing the human voice?—some spectacle appealing to the fleshly eye grander than the invisible revelation, seeking the attention of the inward vision of the soul? We are the worse for the beauty that is round about us if not the better. We cannot live under beautiful environments and circumstances without being debased by them, except we rise to their appeal and put all meaner things under our feet. It is a sad thing to become familiar with beauty,—so familiar with it as not really to see its charm. It is an awful thing to have heard the Gospel so often as to feel weary under the appeal of its gracious thunder or its melting tenderness. We must watch our senses: they will victimise us if we do not; we shall be brought into a state of contemptuousness where we ought to be in a condition of worship. God, then, does not build for mere beauty of form: he always seeks to help the worshipper. He builds altars. Whatever he touches he sanctifies. How possible it is to be living amongst beauty of landscape, of art, and beauty of every imaginable kind, and yet for the soul to sink into unresponsiveness, not seeing “sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, good in everything.” That is irony; that is the contradiction which makes

fools of men,—a depth below even moral degradation, for in moral degradation there may yet remain a kind of intellectual flicker, a species of intellectual majesty ; but in the other condition the whole nature is depleted, debased, diabolised. God does not build for the gratification of taste, otherwise he would subserve the interests of mere vanity. There are some who are still worshippers of the goddess they call Taste. Be it that a thing is in what they call *taste*, and they are satisfied. They will not ask whether the child is living or dead, if the form is preserved in beauty of outline. Taste has its right place.

The tabernacle as a work of art is never to be held in contempt ; but we miss its meaning ; all its Divine poetry is lost upon us, so long as we can merely admire it. To admire under such circumstances is to insult. The true admiration is worship ; the true applause is forgetfulness of the thing itself, complete absorption in the thought it can but dimly express. When our souls are on fire, when our blood is aflame with the true zeal, our senses will be ordered back that our spirit may go forward and turn the wilderness into heaven and common bread into a type of the Lord's body.

God will not have the building put up as an expression of mere sentiment : otherwise, he would be assisting the cause of idolatry. Nothing will satisfy him but a recognition of the supreme purpose. What is the tabernacle for ?—for worship. What is the meaning of it ?—it is a gate opening upon heaven. Why was it set up ?—to lift us nearer God. If we fail to seize these purposes, if we fail of magnifying and glorifying them so as to ennoble our own life in the process, we have never seen the tabernacle. We have seen the thing which an artificer might have made—a toy fit for a bazaar, but not the Church of God, the holy place, the Divine tabernacle let down amongst the dwellings of men. Herein is it for ever true that we may have a Bible but no revelation ; a sermon but no Gospel ; we may be in the church, yet not in the sanctuary ; we may admire beauty, and yet live the life of the drunkard and the debauchee.

In all his building—and God is always building—he qualifies every man for a particular work in connection with the edifice. Verily, God leaves nothing to Moses ! When Moses goes down from this mountain, he will go as an errand-bearer, a messenger ;

he will simply go to carry out instructions. Nothing has been left to his own invention; he will represent God. That is the true picture of all things. We have nothing to say, if we are true teachers, but what we have been told to say. God will tell every man the message which he wishes to have repeated, and every man will tell it in his own voice and in his own individuality of tone; but the message is God's, or it is not a message at all. No man has any right, in this kind of work, to address any other man except that right is founded upon his inspiration. There is no impertinence more intolerable than for any man to stand up and tell his fellow-men to be good, to repent, if so be he is delivering something which he attributes to the heat and zeal of his own imagination. The culmination of impertinence is in what is called the pulpit—if any man shall stand up, and of his own morality tell other men to repent. The utterance must be Divine! it cannot be tolerated in the man, for we are so constituted that human nature would charge upon the man his own action as a contradiction of his speech, and would order him out to reconcile himself with himself before he found fault with the policy of the world. But when the preacher knows that he is preaching to himself, that he is putting into human utterance what he believes to be a Divine message, then though his life be before him as a mocking contradiction, calling him liar when he prays, and hypocrite when he preaches, he knows that he has not gone a warfare at his own charges, and that he is but the medium on which the infinite thought breaks into human speech. Not that the man will rest content with this. Whilst part of his supreme comfort may come to him along such lines, it will ever be his careful business with an industry that knows no relaxation to make his life equal to his speech. The point is that no teacher—Moses, Aaron, Isaiah, Paul—must stand up of his own motion to tell men to be better. Every man must speak that appealing word as the result of Divine inspiration and constraint. God qualifies every man for the work which he has to do. Aaron was not Moses, Bezaleel was not Aaron. Each had his own place, his own mission, his own work; each was Divinely chosen. When Bezaleel lifted the chisel he was performing a Divine purpose—as much so as was Aaron when he went forth with his garment distinguished by all colours of beauty

and eloquent with the chime of golden bells. The one man wants the other man. The work stands still till that other man comes in. Moses, Aaron, and the sons of Aaron, and the seventy elders of Israel, are all standing still till the man with the chisel comes in; looking round upon their incomplete number, they say, "There is some man wanting." That is the true ideal of unity. Division of labour is necessary to the very bond of unity. Each man must feel that he is Divinely called and inspired to do a particular work, and he must feel that the Church cannot move in its completeness until he is in it. Then the shepherd shall be as the king, the nurse shall be almost a mother,—the lighter of the lamp shall have a distinct position as if he were in the family of Aaron, and the humblest toiler in the vineyard will erect himself in the solemn eventide and bless God that he has had some share in the day's varied toil. Who has courage to read the following words aright, and to apply them to the practical history of mankind?

"And I have filled him (Bezaleel) with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship" (xxx. 3-5).

Who can read these words as they ought to be read? How it makes ministers of God by the thousand! We have thought that Aaron was a religious man because of his clothing and because of many peculiarities which separated him from other men; but the Lord distinctly claims the artificer as another kind of Aaron. He will undertake to show a man how to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting stones, and in carving timber, and in all manner of workmanship. Who divides life into *sacred* and *profane*? Who introduces the element of meanness into human occupation and service? God claims all things for himself. When he hears man speak and woman sing, he says—perhaps with a father's pride (we use human terms to express human thoughts)—"Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I, the Lord?" When he sees the sculptor making a rock into an image of Moses, may he not say, "Who hath made man's hand, and given movement to his fingers and wrist? Have not I, the Lord?" Who will say that the preacher is a religious

man, but the artificer is a secular worker? Who will say that one man is inspired, and another man found out his own way for himself? If he found a low way, a mean or shallow way, a way without perspective, and suggestion, and apocalyptic outlook and issue, verily he found it out for himself. But let us claim all true workers as inspired men. We know that there is an inspired art. The world knows it; instinctively, unconsciously, the world uncovers before it.

There is an inspired poetry, make it of what measure you will. The great common heart knows it, says, "That is the true verse; how it rises, falls, plashes like a fountain, flows like a stream, breathes like a summer wind, speaks the thoughts we have long understood, but could never articulate!" The great human heart says, "That is the voice Divine; that is the appeal of Heaven." Why should we say that inspiration is not given to all true workers, whether in gold or in thought, whether in song or in prayer, whether in the type or in the magic eloquence of the burning tongue? Let us enlarge life, and enlarge Providence, rather than contract it, and not, whilst praying to a God in the heavens, have no God in the heart. You would work better if you realised that God is the Teacher of the fingers, and the Guide of the hand. All service would look tenderer to you, richer and larger, if you could say when it is done, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful and glorious in wisdom and in power." A new solemnity gathers around me as I think on these things. The universe is steadier. The whole temple is lifted up to higher grandeur. Nature becomes a sublime totality. Prayer is clothed with broader meaning. Labour is churched and glorified. Art turns its chiselled and flushed features towards its native heaven. Sin acquires a deadlier blackness, and begs to be hidden in some deepening hell. Through all cloud and noise, all rush and strife, God's great trumpet clears a way for the commandments which represent his righteousness, and for the statutes which are to become songs in the house of human pilgrimage. Realise the unity of things. See the structural completeness of the whole idea of the universe and of life. Verily, "the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth," and from the weariest wilderness of sand there is a straight path to the city whose streets are gold.

## Exodus xxxi. 18.

“ . . . two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.”

### THE TABLES OF TESTIMONY.

THOSE two tables are two revelations ; first, a revelation of man ; and second, a revelation of God. In this light we may profitably read the commandments, gathering from them lessons and suggestions of the most far-reaching and useful kind. Given the Ten Commandments and all the other laws relating to them, and we can have no difficulty in finding out the quality of the life to which the commandments were addressed. The statute book of a people is, in one important sense, the history of a nation. He who reads our laws reads our lives. God has written upon these two tables the history, up to that time, of the human heart. Changing the figure, are not the two stones two mirrors, in which men may see what they have done ? The commandments gather up the book of Genesis, and express it in terse lines. It would seem as if the book of Genesis ought to run straight up to the twentieth chapter of Exodus, that it might complete itself. Genesis may be described as covering an experimental period of time. Men were then without written law. Nature was, to a large extent, left to work out its own instinct and its own will. The Genesis which gives us physical beauty also gives us moral ruin. The book of Genesis cannot end in itself. God would not cut us off at the end of Genesis. He would by so doing seem to cut off his own sovereignty, his own purpose, his own fatherhood. After every one of the commandments—not only the Ten Commandments, but all the other laws—God could have given a living illustration of his meaning, quoted from the book of Genesis. The commandments are not abstractions, they are concrete instances ; the commandments are not metaphysical moralities, they express the disasters

and the catastrophes which have been accomplished in human life. For this reason, let it be repeated, the two tables of stone, written by the finger of God, constitute the Divine revelation of human nature. Let us familiarise ourselves with this idea, and feel its rational force.

*"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* What an extraordinary suggestion! How impossible from what the philosophers would call an *a priori* point of view! Such an idea would never enter the human mind! So we might imperfectly and vainly reason. We would not, indeed, credit the human imagination with audacity enough to attempt to create other gods. Human imagination would rather turn in some other direction—would endeavour to flee away from the whole conception and discipline of the Divine idea, and constitute powers and realms altogether distant from the Divine throne. It required the Divine mind itself to see the possibility of this tremendous apostacy. Strange to say, the very first temptation that assailed mankind, so far as we are enlightened by the book of Genesis, was a temptation in this very direction. In effect it was: "Be gods yourselves; you have the fanciful notion that there is one God who has right of control over you, who may call you nightly to his bar, and audit the day's moral accounts; nothing can be more preposterous; eat of this lovely tree, and the film will fall from your eyes, and a new stature and sense of dignity will be given to the soul, and ye shall be as gods." The temptation was worthy of the man. We sometimes have tributes paid to our dignity from unexpected sources. To have tempted the man back into some anterior point in his development (assuming the theory of development to be true) might have been resented, but to tempt him to fall upwards was a temptation worthy of the subtlest of tempters, and worthy to be addressed to a child of the Divine creation. See, therefore, in the very first instance, how God could have quoted a concrete case in illustration of the opening commandment.

*"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"*—for the purposes of worship. Again we say the idea is impossible. It does not fit into the structure of things with any sense of propriety. A man will never be so little of a man as to make an image and fall down before it. But in the book of Genesis you find images

in plenty. This very thing which we now consider to be an impossibility has been a solemn and humiliating fact in the history of the first families of the race. Rachel knew where Laban's gods were, and she stole them. So wonderful a thing is human piety: when perverted it will even steal a god.

*"Honour thy father and thy mother."* Could a concrete instance be put after that commandment? We have seen that when Esau married into Canaanitish relations he did that which was "a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." Parental feeling was ignored; parental rights were scorned; parental sympathies were violated and dishonoured.

*"Thou shalt not kill"*—a metaphysical impossibility, but an actual fact. From the opening of the book of Genesis to the end, Cain has been, in himself or in his progeny, a dominating figure.

*"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* The book of Genesis contains more terrible statements about that crime than about any other, having in it chapters which no man may read aloud.

*"Thou shalt not steal."* If Esau has violated one of the commandments, and is quoted as a historical instance: Jacob has violated another, and may be set up in the gallery evermore.

Thus the commandments are not metaphysical subtleties; are not fanciful suppositions in the Divine mind; are not merely ethical theories; they are one by one expressions of what man himself has done. The Ten Commandments are not ten mysteries. The Ten Commandments do not show that virtue is divisible into ten problems; but they show that vice has discovered ten ways of breaking through the golden circle of obedience. We know the commandments. Were no names mentioned; were the two tables of stone trumpeted by an angel from the radiant cloud, we should say at once, "These words are known down here, they need no exposition; we ourselves are living illustrations of every one of them." This being the case, what a tremendous hold the Bible gets upon every man! It speaks to something in the man; it secures the consent of the conscience of every man. The inward witness does not say, "Such commandments presuppose impossibilities on the part of those to whom they are addressed"; the answer is, "We have broken

these laws one by one; we have wanted other gods; we have thought that a carved image might serve instead of a living Judge; fathers and mothers we have killed as soldiers kill one another on the battle-field; we have killed, committed adultery, stolen, broken holy days, violated sacred places; the angel is not speaking through his great trumpet of thunder to populations a whole universe distant from us, he has studied our history, and he is addressing himself to our iniquities."

The commandments are also on the other side quite as distinctly revelations of God. Let us consider an inquiry to this effect:—looking at the commandments, what should we infer as to the character of God? For the purposes of this study we are supposing that we have only the commandments as an indication of the moral quality of the Legislator. With the two tables of stone before us, written in a language we can understand, what should we say is the character of the Legislator? Do we not see a wonderful care for mankind? Is there not an undertone of affectionateness in all the majestic speech? Are there not some tears amid all this awful storm? Was not the tempest devised as an accompaniment to hide the grief? Now that we are more carefully learned in all the wisdom of the heavenly kingdom may we not descry a broken heart where we once only thought of an indignant Jehovah? This is the true care for man—to care for his character, to care for his soul, to be vigilant respecting all the finer elements and qualities of his nature. To dress the body may be but to perpetrate an irony. To care for the child's physical constitution may be but a cruel sin, but to care for his moral quality, for his temper, his instincts, his soul-forces; to devote attention to his mind, to his motives, to the very springs and first motions of his life—that is care,—a care, indeed, not inconsistent with solicitude regarding matters physical and circumstances of an outward kind; but this is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. To clothe the child, so far as it is possible, with the garment of a pure character; to make the young soul heroic in all purpose and endeavour; to lead the heart to the mystery of sacrifice, and to make the innermost tenant of the human being ashamed of sin, afraid of it, regarding it as hateful—that is to show true care, true appreciation of human nature. This is what God does here. He is building up an interior heart.

He is moulding an innermost life ; as for clothing, decoration, circumstance, outward importance—these are fading flowers. God cannot rest until he has made the heart right and purified the fountain of the life.

Can we fail to see a gracious condescension to the moral capacity of mankind ? The Lord is pleased to speak of himself as a "jealous God." Does he mean that ? Not as we mean it. This word has sometimes shocked us. It was not spoken to us. God has always spoken to the race in the language of its own day. This is the only speech that could have been understood at the time at which it was spoken. This explains many a difficulty in the earlier books of Scripture. Why persist in taking our modern education back to earlier barbarities ? In this way we defraud ourselves of the richest teaching of history, and bring upon the mind a sense of confusion which interferes with the unity of worship and the completeness of sacrifice. You use to children words you will not use to them when they are fully grown men and women. You must avail yourselves of an emphasis which would be out of place in speech addressed to equals, or to those who have made considerable advance in intellectual culture. The Divine meaning could only have been expressed in the words which God used at the time. The word is not the meaning, the meaning is in the word ; as the body is not the man, the man is in the body. History sheds off the body and reveals the spirit. This is the law of spiritual progress, and this is one of the innermost secrets of spiritual insight.

Can we once more fail to see how gradually men have been trained to moral pureness and dignity ? The commandments are in a certain sense very rude words. They would be resented if addressed to us personally in some of their details. What man of this century, having passed through the process of Christian culture, could have addressed to him seriously the commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*" ? The man might be offended ; he would suppose he was altogether unknown to the person who thus rudely addressed him, seeing that manslaughter or homicide never came within the imagination, which would have been debased or inflamed into delirium if it could have contemplated the shedding of human blood. We must begin the education of people where they themselves are. Education

always goes down to the pupil, and thus lifts the pupil to its own level. It is one of the finest proofs of the gradual revelation of the Divine kingdom that from the first to the last the law pursues an ascending and widening line. How subtly the last commandment seems to link itself on to a higher kingdom. Is it not so in all development, that there is something of feature or *nexus*, something of subtle indication or fleshly possession, meaning that one kingdom has culminated, and another is just about to come down to earth? That *nexus* you do not find in "*Thou shalt not kill*," "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*," "*Thou shalt not steal*." These are what we should now term broad vulgarities; but the connecting link or tentacle, just hooking itself on to something almost invisible, is to be found in the last commandment, "*Thou shalt not covet*." That is the most spiritual word we have yet heard in all the commandments addressed to us in our social relations. The legislator is now giving us to understand that we have a spirit. He is about to prepare the way for some nobler kingdom, and truth, and thought, and relation. Thus by throwing new words into a language God prepares the way for new thoughts that are quickly to follow from heaven. God does not make great gaps which it is impossible either to leap or to bridge over; but by turning common language into uncommon uses, by striking points of departure, by the change of one hue of language, he prepares the way for the next higher kingdom, the next brighter revelation. Now that he has come so far as covetousness, he will, by-and-by, come right into the very centre of the heart and tell us that we are no longer in the infantile school, needing rude instruction about killing and stealing and other iniquities, but must have the heart cleansed, for out of the human heart proceed all those things which offend the heart of God.

Why go back to these old times? Because we want to be like those teachers who are worshipped for their comprehensiveness and their philosophical temper. The preacher can go back as well as the annalist. When a political historian spends days, and weeks, and months, in the Record Office and in the literary recesses of the British Museum, and then comes forth with his history, we call him a philosophical historian. When he enriches his pages with innumerable references to volumes we never heard of giving page, chapter, section, and line, we call him a trust-

worthy historian. When the social annalist would show his country what the course of his country has been, the farther he can go back into archaic times the more he is respected by modern critics. But when a preacher goes back to Genesis, he is supposed to have gone out of the times, and to have connected himself with forces, and ministries, and institutions which have fallen into desuetude. We protest against such partial criticism. There is a philosophy of religious inquiry as well as a philosophy of political investigation, and we insist upon having the Book of God read as a whole. That is our purpose for going back to its opening pages and to its earliest characters. The book is one. It never goes back or overlaps itself in a backward direction, but from first to last it maintains a line of progress and asserts a vertebral unity which constitutes an unassailable argument for its Divine origin. The books of Scripture must not be broken off one from the other as if they were separated and unrelated stones in a heap. If you take a book out of the Bible you take a stone out of a temple, a star out of a constellation,—a felony that cannot be permitted. So we must not be deterred from going into our records and our museums, and searching into roots, and origins, and beginnings. We, too, must be prayerfully philosophical and rationalistic, turning over page by page, and turning over every page, fearing nothing that comes up ; taking it in chronological sequence, and persevering through all rocky places, and dangerous paths, and mountainous districts—on and on, until we come to the trumpets and vials, and thunders, and songs and hallelujahs of the Apocalypse ; and having come into these completions we shall know the meaning of the last sweet word—for when all the thunders have died away, when the storm has spent itself on the affrighted hills, there comes this still small voice—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

## Exodus xxxii.

### AARON'S IDOLATRY.

MOSES had been sent for to go up to the top of the mountain and speak to God. The man was sent for: he owed nothing to his own originality or invention. It is a mistake to suppose that Moses invented anything, originated or outlined anything of his own imagination. The Bible is of God, or it is not a word to be believed or received into the heart, or made the monitor of the troubled life. The minister does not make his own sermons: if he does, what wonder that they are not heard, or being heard are quickly forgotten; that they take no hold of the life, dominating over it with sweet and gracious sovereignty, ruling it into order, and charming it into hope? The man made it out of his own mind: he invented phrases and set them in order; the sermon is a kind of intellectual mosaic thinly sprinkled with the baptism of dew, but a human manufacture, a very clever and stirring invention—nothing more. The true minister goes up to consult the Master for a long time. He is on the mountain, and the people think he is wasting the opportunity. They say, "We are waiting, the world is waiting, and as for this man Moses and all his tribe, where are they?" They are where they ought to be—out of sight, but communing with God; away from the fray, the battle, the race, but receiving nourishment, nutriment, inspiration, comfort, and even words by which to express the Divine thought. And what is true of Moses and the minister is true of every genuine believer in God. He has his interviews with the Lord in the mountain, his periods of solitude, his seasons of withdrawal from strife, and noise, and unholy revelry; and coming back from the mountain of contemplation he touches life with a steadier hand, and does his duty with a completer obedience and more radiant cheerfulness. We should fight better if we prayed more; we should be more

original if we were more spiritual ; we should startle the world more if our face burned with the lustre which reflects our interviews with God face to face. The general is on the top of the mountain receiving marching orders ; he is asking what to do next ; he will invent nothing, plan nothing, start nothing, be responsible for nothing. He says, "I stand until I am told to go forward ; I do the Lord's bidding ; I do not act upon my own ingenuity." That is the truly religious life ; that is the inner, spiritual, Divine, immortal life : that takes nothing into its own hands, but offers those hands as instruments through which the Divine Being himself may operate upon the destinies of the world. Do we love solitude ? Do we ever go up for our marching orders ? Is it our habit to shut out the world and keep it far below us that we may have every day some five minutes at least with God—say in the morning, say early in the morning, or be it noontide, or in the quiet eventide ? Do we ever clip out of the day some five minutes and say, "You shall be God's minutes ; through you I will receive messages from the Eternal One ; I will carve a five minutes' sanctuary out of every day " ?—for in five minutes how much can be done !—what great speeches made ! what oaths and vows exchanged ! what memories touched into new vividness ! and what vows formed with solemn and pregnant meanings ! Let God have part of every day ; then, when his own—our own—full day comes, it will be all too short for the interviews we wish to hold with him, and for the messages we wish to deliver and to receive.

When Moses was away the people became impatient ; they said :

"As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him " (xxxii. 1).

Were they then dependent upon one man ? Yes, to a large extent. I thought every man was one ? Not at all. We are dependent upon our elder brother, our strongest man, our noblest suppliant, our wisest leader, in many of the crises and agonies of life. For a long time we are as good as he is ; we know no difference between him and us ; we wonder sometimes at apparent tokens of superiority,—but suddenly we are confronted with circumstances which classify men : we come in face of great claims and demands which search us, and try us, and see what our quality really is,—then we know which is Moses, which is

Aaron, which is the man of prayer, and which is the man of mighty talk. The people did not understand the discipline of keeping still. That is a difficult discipline really to understand. We understand the discipline of going on,—that suits our impatience and our littleness; but the discipline of standing still, simply waiting, doing everything by doing nothing, reducing life to a process of breathing, being nothing in the great tragedy,—who can understand that? Who is equal to that strain? Who has the patience that can simply stand still and see the salvation of God? And yet this is the way in which we are sometimes trained. Let us own our impatience in this matter. I want to be going on, and I cannot stir; I want every stroke of my arm to win a battle, and behold I cannot raise my hand to my head. So much could be done before sunset, and we are not allowed even to make the endeavour. That discipline may be accepted either in the way of fretfulness, chafing, vexation, kicking against the pricks; or it may be so accepted as to chasten the soul, clarify it, make it without flaw or stain,—a holy and beautiful thing laid in daily sacrifice upon the high altar. How shall we accept it? You want the appointment now; you want to come into your blessing to-day; you want the answer to the great question you have put immediately; and God says, “No; not to-day, nor to-morrow, nor this year, but by-and-by.” How do you take that answer? Do you fret, chafe, kick, rebel? or do you say—“Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight”? If you can say that, you need no more growth in grace: you are ripe; you are matured under the blessed and all-comforting sun of God’s glory, and may surely be quickly transplanted to the higher gardens. That is the last conquest of grace, the supreme acquisition of the soul,—to have no will, to be ready to stand, to go, to fight, to wait, to suffer, saying always, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

And yet the people were religious all the time. They said: “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us,”—an unintended tribute to the majesty of their leader. “Make us gods which shall go before us,”—an unintended rebuke to Aaron. The responsibility did not devolve upon him. They did not say—“Come, thy elder brother is lost; be thou our leader and our king, and we will do thee homage.” Moses gone—he can be

replaced only by gods! It is thus that we reluctantly and sometimes unconsciously pay tribute to our masters, and leaders, and noblest teachers, and benefactors. One Moses gone—gods must supply his place! Moses was one nominally, but Moses was influentially a host. It will take a good many gods such as Aaron can make to fill up the place of Moses. But Aaron did not feel the rebuke; the people perhaps did not intend it as a compliment or tribute to Moses. But you will find if you give up the Church, you will require a good many theatres to make up its place. You will discover that if you give up the poor preacher, the praying man, you will be driven to many expedients to find an equivalent in the place he really occupied. You did not think so at the time; you said you would find an equivalent next door—over the way—to-morrow,—ay, it can easily be done. But when the terrific vacancies in life occur, then we begin to feel how much we have lost. We say, now that the old father is gone, how we miss him; we did not know he was so much to us until now; why, he did everything so quietly, easily, graciously, that we did not know that he was doing so much; we miss him morning, noon, and night; we miss him in the garden and on the street, at the table and in all the ways of life: the sunshine all gone: the helping story no longer told: the gracious advice no longer available. Ay, you will have to gather a great many people together before you find a total equal to the father whom you did not really appreciate when he was with you. It takes an innumerable host of acquaintances to equal one friend. It takes a whole furnaceful of gods to equal one Moses. Do not wait for the vacancy to occur to honour the man, the woman, the child, the teacher, the helper, the companion; but honour to whom honour is due now; and away with the cant, the hypocrisy, the falsehood, which says, "Had we but known what Moses was when he was with us, we should indeed have honoured and obeyed him." If you do not honour and obey your dear old mother now, I will not listen with complacency to the canting lie which attempts to shed tears over her tomb. Pay her court now, be civil to her now with a generous courtesy, wait upon her now with filial homage and obedience; and as for the epitaph, let any writer of phrases invent that. You keep her out of her grave,—no matter who writes upon the stone which marks the sod under

which she lies. Oh that we might have apt minds and good, clear, penetrating sense in these matters! and remember that many acquaintances are not equal to one friend, many gods not equal to one Moses, many casual helpers and assistants not equal to one father, and all the amusements in the world not equal to one holy service in God's blessed house. Could we seize these truths and make them the bread on which our heart lives and grows, we should be sad and weak no more.

Moses came down from the mount bringing great messages from God. What was in his heart as he carried the two tables of the testimony? Here is writing for Israel, here is God's gospel of law, written by God's own finger, graven upon the tables. What a day Israel will have! What reading of the testimony! What gluttonous eyes will devour the holy feast of truth! Oh, what spiritual voracity will consume this word of the Lord! Hark! what is that noise—clanging, shouting? "The voice of them that shout for mastery?" No. "The noise of them that cry for being overcome?" No. What then?—"the noise of them that sing do I hear." Then they are glad with a false gladness. Singing is religious? Often very irreligious. But the hymn is a religious one. True, but the singers are not religious singers; and religious songs on the lips of irreligious singers is an irony which might make the angels weep. To hear great Bible words sung by people who value the music rather than the truth is an anti-climax full of sad pathos to hearts that worship truly at the altar. I would these sinners did not double their sin by singing God's words. Why not invent empty phrases? Why not employ incoherent speeches? Why not sing the unrelated words of the dictionary just as they stand in thick columns, and let God's great words alone? Thus we are always paying homage to the very God we deny. There are no words like his. We borrow them to sin against them; we steal them to make money out of them. There is no book with so many oratorios in it as the Bible—ay, and great anthems and swelling songs, could they but be sung aright,—sung with the soul. It is robbery, it is sevenfold murder, to sing God's words without God's meaning,—to laugh over them, and jest about them, and ask how they "went" in the vocal dance. God's words sung with God's meaning,—then make the church a place of music in

very deed; sing morning, noon, and night, for then singing will be preaching, and such preaching as will make the heart cry for the very agony of love. It is not enough that we sing: we must — sing with the spirit and with the understanding, and have a right object, and a right subject, and a right soul; then the singing will be good. Moses drew near and with eyes purged by visions Divine, with a soul out of which had been taken every filament of evil, he saw the situation at once as with the burning eyes of purity, and he first inflicted judgment and then asked for explanation. Ay, that is right in great crises, in solemn eras of the soul. Moses did not first hold judgment; his

“anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it” (xxxii. 19, 20),

and then said—How did this come? Oh the swift anger! the holy, flying, infinite judgment! There can be no explanation of sin,—that is the explanation of the judgment. When the explanation is demanded, it is but to accentuate the judgment with a keener emphasis; it is but to overwhelm the culprit with a profounder humiliation. Moses was never so much Moses as just at that moment. He cleared a space for himself, he blanched the cheek of the singing hypocrites; they all fell back, and each man would have cried unto the rocks and to the mountains to hide him from that angry face,—symbol and prediction of a more awful situation and more poignant cry. Are we prepared for these visitations? Have we made any calves? Ay, many! We have been great at idol-making. Can I count the calves which we have worshipped? My memory would not be steady enough, or persistent enough, to name all the lines in the unholy catalogue:—Pride, Fashion, Gluttony, Self-Indulgence, Wealth, Station, Influence, Appearances,—all calves of our making, calves of gold. Who does not feel a sensation of pride when introduced to a man notably rich? Who could contradict him? Who would not defer to him? or who would not irreligiously worship him by affecting to despise him? What is your calf or idol? Mark you the earrings were very good. When Aaron said, “Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters,” the

gold was excellent as earrings, but bad as gods. Do not push things out of their right position and relationship. You may make a good thing into a bad one by bad use. The thing itself—the gold—is good, the earring is well shaped and well placed and gracefully worn,—all that is right; but turned into gods it becomes an offence to Heaven. So it is with our money. It has its place and its use. Devoted to honourable business, turned over and over in honourable commerce, the more you make the better,—God bless you in basket and in store, give you bountiful harvest-fields and plenty of gold, because you win it honestly, you spend it wisely and graciously; the more you have the more the poor have; you are treasurers and stewards, and you look into the bag which is the Lord's, and say, "There is still more here; it belongs to the poor man and the weak man: take it, and I will make plenty more next week." Ay, that is the way to make it. It is so by that gracious grip the hand learns the cunning skill to make still more and more, even to abundance. "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty,"—yes, to poverty. God withers the hand that is held down in desuetude, having forgotten sweet acts of charity. Take out that hand, thou palsied man! "I cannot!" Another—God—has sucked the life-juice out of it, and it cannot be moved! And so with influence, so with worldly advantages, so with physical and bodily charms. Wear them for the good of others. Make everybody welcome as to the hospitable table of God; and the beauty will grow, it will be freshened with tenderer bloom every morning: for the face is made every day by its morning prayer and by its morning look out of windows which open upon heaven; and all manly grace and nobleness—these grow as they are used for God in heaven and truth on earth. God will have us in his grip at some point if we do wrong; or if we do right, he will have us in his holy hand, not the grip of fingers harder than iron, mighty as almightiness, but the embrace of a love that has no symbol but a mother's piety, no type on earth but the heart that would die for its offspring. Now we have a chance to make gods,—do not let us make one. The great Father is away from our eyes: let us wait for his coming. The King has gone into a far country,—what a chance we have! He is quite as much here. We do not see him,—what a chance we have!

Let us turn it into a chance to pray, into an opportunity to double our faith; let us turn it into a chance to read more deeply the holy testimony. Then when the King returns from the far country and calls his servants together to take account of them, we shall stand before him with radiant faces, expectant hearts, blessing God in sweet pure hymns that the King has come back from his travels and is seated in his rightful place. We shall see him one day. Blessed is that servant who shall be found waiting, watching!

The Lord mourned that Israel "turned aside quickly out of the way." The word *quickly* seems to contain most of the meaning. It is always so. We go with eagerness in the wrong direction, and with leaden feet we climb the steep which leads us away to the upper places. There is but a step between us and death,—not physical death only, but moral death, intellectual death, social death. The thing nearest life is death. Even physically the strongest man is always walking by the edge of his own grave. In a moment a man may speak a word which will bring down the tower which a lifetime was required to build. One action of the hand will shatter the character of the most venerable man. A character is not destroyed a blow at a time—though even the slow process is not impossible, but the slowness is only on the social side; it is the one act done in one moment that shatters the character in the sight of God. Towards society we may go down by slow and almost imperceptible depreciation; but to the eye of God we rise or fall by one action. The departure is accomplished in a moment, and the return is but the act of one contrite prayer. A series of appalling thoughts is started by this circumstance. Life is a continual peril and can only be sustained by a continual prayer. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Never leave me; never forsake me. The higher my attainments the deeper will be my faith, if my watchfulness be not found wanting. Who can measure the time required for a stone to fall from the highest pinnacle into the lowest depth? If we would know the rapidity of the descent, we must watch the stone as it falls from its place of honour; it seems to be the work of a moment. Destruction cometh suddenly upon the sons of men. No destruction comes so suddenly as the destruction of the soul's attitude towards things Divine.

### Exodus xxxii. 30-35.

30. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin : and now I will go up unto the Lord ; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee : behold, mine Angel shall go before thee : nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35. And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

### PROVIDENCE DELAYED.

LET us look at the historical picture which has now been almost completed. Moses had been summoned to meet the Lord upon Mount Sinai. There he had tarried forty days and forty nights. On coming down the mountain, it was discovered that Aaron and the people had fashioned and worshipped a golden calf. On descending to the plain Moses broke the two tables of stone, and inflicted humiliation and punishment upon the idolaters. And strange to say—yet not strange to those who know the wondrous ways of the human heart—no sooner had Moses expended his righteous indignation than he began to pray for the very people on whom he had uttered his denunciation and his wrath. Here a very curious expression occurs :

“ And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation ” (xxxiii. 7).

But he had been in the mountain for the express purpose of receiving a specification for the building of the tabernacle ; how comes it, then, that we read of the tabernacle before it was built ? We have been expecting the erection of this glorious edifice, and,

behold, in the very agony of our expectation, we read that "Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation." This was a temporary tabernacle. Probably it was the tent which belonged exclusively to Moses himself, and in the urgency of his sacred passion, he anticipated the building of the edifice which had been sketched to him in the mount, and extemporised an altar. There is no mystery about this. We are forced by sadness and painful surprises into new postures of supplication and new eloquence of intercession. Moses was pre-eminently the man to do this very thing. Now and again, though known as the meekest of men, there flamed up out of him a hidden fire, that burned and showed him to be just the man to see the flaming bush where he learned his first lesson of leadership and saw what was truly his first revelation of the God of the living. A lesson lies here. Moses will not wait for the consecration of Aaron: he himself becomes priest before God on behalf of the people, and pours out his soul in passionate intercession. He was priest before the anointed one; he built a tabernacle of his own, before he had time to erect the specified structure. These are the actions of a burning life, the eccentricities and exaggerations of men who cannot proceed by cold rule and adapt themselves to intricate, pedantic, and slow-moving mechanism.

In this high temper he utters the boldest prayer ever uttered up to that time by human lips:

"I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (xxxiii. 18).

He had been a long time upon the mountain; he had become acclimatised to that high region; for a considerable space he had been away from the commonplaces of earth and time; and now that he had come back again, and had been touched by the defilement of a sinful community, he bounds back and goes to a still higher height than ever in his soul's meaning and passion, and says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." We may have experience of a kindred kind, if so be we belong to the family of fire. But men differ here, as elsewhere and otherwise. We are not all children of the flame. Some run away from fire; they have no liking to lay their hand upon the volcano, and caress it

as if it were a friend. We must have compassion one upon another, and wait for the slow and the crippled, nor visit with too severe a censure the naturally and unchangeably cold. Strange, though cold, they fly from fire. It is not a coldness ~~that~~ impels towards the burning-place, but another kind of coldness that keeps away the very soul it chills from the centre of ardour—the spring and fountain of eternal heat. Moses did not utter this prayer in cold blood. Sometimes we do not know what we say in prayer. We know not how hot the soul is, and ardent the imagination, till we surprise ourselves by some burst of words that make us feel how near we have come to the violation of the screened and impenetrable sanctuary. But better err in that direction than fall down in lowness of mind, pettiness of conception, smallness of purpose, and frigidity of heart. These are mountain experiences, these are the memories of a man who stepped across mountains at a time by no slow passing, but by the familiarity of a man who, having lived amid the scenes, had apparently made the scenes love him, and yield to him, and keep back from him nothing of their sacredness and wealth.

Now Moses must return to Mount Sinai. Time is lost. A sinful parenthesis has thrust itself into the revelation of Divine intentions. Moses re-ascends the hill, and spends forty days and forty nights more in that high sanctuary, and the ground is all gone over again as if not one word had been said.

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai” [the second time], “with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (xxxiv. 29).

What do we know about our best selves? Men have qualities of which they are not cognisant. We may be nearer heaven than we suppose. We may be nearer God than we fully realise. Sometimes there may be between us and him but a thin film, less than a veil in thickness. We know not where sometimes we stand.

Then Moses, returning, delivered the instructions to the people. He told them what God told him; and the people, having heard what Moses communicated to them, “did according to all that the Lord commanded.” For the time being they were converted. Their conversion was not a momentary and final act. They went through a kind of process of conversion—one conversion succeed-

ing another, repentance following upon sin with quickness, and certainty.

This is the historical position in which we now stand—what are its sacred and eternal lessons? Do we not see how God's purposes are thwarted and deferred by human perversity? God's purpose was far advanced in the cloud, but the people at the foot of the mountain could not wait. At the very time when God had determined upon the election and consecration of Aaron to the priesthood Aaron was spending his time in moulding and chiselling the golden calf. Time is thus wasted. Just as the revelation was about to appear, the radiant cloud was turned aside by the wickedness of the idolatrous mob at the base of the hill. We do not know how often God has just been on the threshold, coming into the house, and has been affrighted by the overhearing of some idolatrous or blasphemous noise. We might have been crowned fifty years ago, but just as the coronation was about to take place, we were discovered in the manufacture of an idol. Your sins have kept good things from you.

It is most instructive to keep the two scenes vividly before the eye of the mind. The first scene is that of God with Moses in the cloud speaking about the consecration of Aaron, setting apart Aaron and his sons to the priestly office for ever. There the Lord detailed the mystic and symbolic garments by which the priest was to be clothed. That is the one scene. At the very moment when that scene is taking place in the cloud, Aaron is listening to the foolish clamour which insists upon having a god made, or is at that instant himself employing the graving tool upon the calf, that he may make an idol for Israel. What a solemn view this gives one of life! When we are thinking least of God, God is thinking most of us; or when God is thinking most of us, purposing for us great office and honour and service, we are farthest away in thought and love from the altar where he intended to meet us. Why is the vision delayed?—Because of the idolatry of the people for whom it was intended. Why tarry the chariot wheels of the King?—Because the people towards whom he was hastening in his golden chariot have prostituted their affections and turned their prayers to forbidden and helpless gods. Why should we blame Providence for slow-

ness when the answer is in our own conduct? It may suit us in some of the lower moods of our mind and heart to think of God as very slow in his action and as keeping back revelation for inscrutable reasons. On one side of life that may be true, on another side of life it is not only untrue in fact, but it is unjust in principle. Who stopped the revelation?—Aaron. Why were forty days and forty nights wasted?—Because of the sin of the people. Christ might have been here yesterday, but for our making of the golden calf; fifty years ago he might have had the whole country as his own, but for perfidy, selfishness, and practical atheism. We might now see some great figure in the sun, and hear some voice supernatural, in music heavenly, but that we have filled our ears with riotous noise and deafened ourselves with the thunders of our own idolatry. Do not blame God for waste of history and waste of time, and repetition of events which we thought had been accomplished. Speaking reverently, God himself might have thought that the tabernacle was just about to be begun, and Aaron in a few minutes would be called to priestly office and honour, but (still accommodating human language to Divine mysteries) he was surprised and grieved by an action on Aaron's part, which suspended the Divine revelation and held back the honour that was prepared. What we might have been this day but for the calf-making, the idolatry, the disobedience, and the sins of various names! The Lord was just ready to make kings of us, when we made fools of ourselves. God was signing the decree that was to have given us solidity, influence, high position, and noble honour, and ere he laid down the pen of signature we smote him in the face by some new sin. Then we spoke about the mysteries of Providence, and wondered why God was so slow in his manifestations and revelations, it never occurring to the heart that had just sinned, that itself shut up the heavens and turned back a purpose which was just about to open in magnificent and beneficial fruition. When we wonder at the weeks being wasted, and the time being non-productive, and history being barren, instead of always making a providential mystery of it, let us ask ourselves the soul-dividing question, Are not we to blame for this loss of time?

Yet even sin may be made to contribute to the good man's highest education. Moses was enriched by this very circumstance.

He never prayed in his life as he prayed for the children of Israel. When he saw what they had done, said he,

"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—";

There language fails; the sentence is not completed; it was completed in the living instance with a great choking sob which, having been overcome, made way for these continuing words,—

"And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (xxxii. 32).

He could not survive an unpardoned nation; account for it as we may, he had come so to identify himself with the people that their pardon involved his, and his heaven was involved in theirs, and to be without them was an issue not to be borne by his noble and sensitive nature. What a hold his work had upon him! He was not priest, minister, or ambassador, who could stand aside from his people and let them be divided, sundered, smitten, and accursed, saying, "I am free; take you, who deserve it, the judgment of God." We already begin to feel the formation of that spiritual fellowship which cannot be dissolved. Here is a family within a family, a life within a life, a tenderness more sensitive than all the tenderness of perishable relationship. We now begin to see what is meant by the society of souls, the masonry of hearts, the oneness of the innermost nature of man. Moses could not bear to be left whilst Israel was lost. Who could be? Can the shepherd come home at night without his flock, and be merry in the house whilst the flock is being torn by the wolf? If he could be so happy, he would be no shepherd, but a selfish hireling. Can the general return, saying, "The army is broken, slain; it was no blame of mine, and I have come to enjoy the feast and the dance, and forget the bones that whiten on the field"? If he made a speech so base he would dispossess himself of every title to be called a soldier of the true blood. A minister standing before God to receive a solitary crown, saying, "The people are lost, but I did my duty; not a man has come with me; still, I claim the heaven due to virtue"! Could he make a speech so vile, no heaven could God shape for his residence and welcome. In all our higher moods we are one. We cannot be at rest whilst there is one vacant chair at the table which might be filled. Paul rose to the same magnanimity when he said he could wish himself accursed rather than Israel should not be saved; he would be

prepared to be lost if the people could be saved. We do not come into that sacred passion in any way conceived by the human mind, or invented by human selfishness. It is the inspiration of Christ—yes, it is the very mystery and the glory of the Cross. Whilst the people, with Aaron at their head, were content with their idol, Moses said, “Show me thy glory.” Some sights must be purged out of our vision, for they dim the whole outview and aspect of things. To have seen sin in the right way, and yet not to have suffered in feeling, but to have risen up into a tender and truer appreciation of holiness, is really to suggest an inspired prayer. “Show me thy glory.” There is logic in this passion; there is rational sequence in all this tide of feeling, though it rolls billow upon billow, as if in a great confusion and tumult. When for a moment you have perused some debasing book, or even some feeble and inane composition, or have seen how the noble language of the fatherland can be debased into the utterance of things so jejune, so juiceless, and mean, how you have longed to take up some grand old author whose every word was a burning fire, every sentence the beginning of a revelation, every page the work of a master, that you might forget what you have passed through; and have it obliterated from the receptive memory! It is but a feeble picture of what Moses felt, and what we may feel, when we have seen the calf we are called to worship. We long to forget the miserable spectacle in some burst of glory worthy of a vision opened by the Almighty wisdom. So Moses was the better for this most ludicrous as well as mischievous and iniquitous event. He did not fall into the temptation. We need men of that mould and temper, who, coming down a hill of prayer and high communion, and seeing our folly, look upon it with the right eyes, and burn it with their anger, and scorch it with their jealousy for God. Let us pray for such men. They are the angels of God amongst us. The Aarons of the race would fall into all snares and traps, and yield to all tumultuous clamour for new policies and new programmes. We need the stern, iron, burning man, the incorruptible patriot, the theologian whose soul is fastened upon central truths, the suppliant who never can lower the tone of his intercession, to keep us right, to call us back—a man so terrible that he can smite us with judgment and, ere the thunder dies, turn his very anger into prayer.

## Exodus xxxiii. 2.

"And I will send an angel before thee ; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite."

### THE EXPULSION OF THE HEATHEN.

THE awful statements made respecting the heathen, or non-Jewish peoples, have occasioned much surprise and not a little resentment. In the twenty-third chapter are words of an exciting kind upon this subject. In the twenty-eighth verse we read : "And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." If we take such words in a narrow and literal sense, we cannot fail to be shocked. It is right that we should resent them. They represent the very spirit of oppression and murder. We cannot worship a God who thus separates himself from our conscience. But if we take the words in the right sense, we shall find that they represent what is daily and necessarily taking place in human history. They set forth the very philosophy of progressive civilisation, and would continue to be operative even if the Bible were closed for ever. This is not a Biblical matter. It neither comes nor goes with the Bible merely as a book. It is a law. Account for it as we may, make of it what we can, there it is, inevitable, irresistible, incessant. Many of the men who have turned aside from the Bible because of such expressions, are spending their time in showing that such occurrences are part of the very necessity of history. This is the glory of the Bible. When narrowly read it drives men away from it as if a fire had scorched them. When they pursue their studies upon other ground and make their way into history, progress, human development, and all the mystery of civilisation, they come back to say that all had been foretold in sharp outline in the very book which they had once despised because they

once misunderstood it. Some benevolent persons might suggest that the expulsion of the heathen peoples was a hypothetical one, that the verses so cruel in their first aspect might be read as it were subjunctively, after this fashion : " If the heathen peoples, —the Canaanites, the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite,—should oppose me, and set up their will against mine, I will undertake for thee, and thou shalt have a clear course." That is not exposition which goes to the root and philosophy of things. It may cover up the mystery for a time or it may double the mystery by an aggravation which was meant to be pious ; but we must find other lines and stand upon other ground, and enable ourselves by sufficient study to grasp the whole situation,—not as it is indicated in one chapter or one verse, but as it is outlined and developed on the whole field of Biblical revelation. To understand such terms we must make ourselves acquainted with the Biblical theory and method of human development. We must of all things be careful not to snatch at isolated verses and isolated expressions. The Bible must be studied and applied in its entirety.

What, then, is the Biblical theory ? We find that a point of departure was established in the selection of Abram as the typical head of a new humanity. Whilst Adam represents the outer humanity, the initial and visible man, the historical unit of the race, Abram represents the inner and spiritual humanity, the fuller thought of God in the creation of man, —the humanity that is to be, the eternal likeness of God. Understand, we are now endeavouring to discover the Biblical conception without saying whether it is true or untrue. First of all, let us grasp the philosophy as it is stated in the Bible. To place the matter somewhat figuratively, then, it may be put thus : As Adam was made out of the dust of the ground, so Abram was made out of the dust of Adam, and as Adam had control over all the lower animals, so Abram had control over all the lower civilisations. Account for this dominion as you please ; there it is. The scientific difficulty is quite as great as the theological one. That one race does put down another is the broadest fact in history. It would be imagined from some loose and incoherent talk that the Bible created the difficulties out of which we have made moral mysteries. Were the Bible closed, the difficulties would remain

just where they are. The Bible comes with a conception which points toward a large and noble construction and issue. Therein the Bible is to be heard. The Bible does not create human life ; it recognises, interprets, inspires, and directs it.

Light now begins to dawn upon the mystery. It now begins to be clear that this act was no mere act of butchery or destruction, but the gradual and solemn development of a purpose, whatever the origin of that purpose may have been. It is a fact in ethnology that some races do succumb to others. We cannot escape the fact that some races are dominant and some are servile, and that the great law of the survival of the fittest is written upon the very face of all life from the meanest to the highest. The Biblical reader is only careful that the expression, "the survival of the fittest," shall not be impoverished of its highest and richest meaning ; he will seize the expression and make the highest use of it. Meanwhile, account for it as you may, with an open Bible or a shut Bible, the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, are going down, or have gone down, and another type of humanity is bearing aloft the banner of advancement and conquest. Suppose we close the Bible, we do not then revive the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite ; suppose we say the Bible is not from heaven, we do not reinstate the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Whatever our theory may be, it is certain that those races are going or have gone ; that they played their part and have given way to another and higher humanity. Some illustration of a collateral kind we may find in strictly personal development. Let a new life come into a man—a life associated with a new conception of duty, sacrifice, honour, or a life associated with some other new and broad and noble idea ; and what is the consequence ? Out goes his heathenism. The Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which filled up the most of his life, are driven out by the light, and the beauty, and the purity of this new Abram,—this new conception of light. What an outgoing there is from the soul ! What superstitions and prejudices are scourged out under the mighty and redeeming influence of a new idea of life ! What new habits are established ! What broader and keener discipline is applied ! How the whole nature, which

was once a wilderness, blossoms as the rose ! and the whole life, which was once a barren desert, glows with passionate blossoming ! Some idea of a collateral kind arises from that conception. It throws light upon what is meant by the erection of a new humanity that shall put down, control, absorb, destroy, or glorify all things less than itself. In all these interpretations we want time. A thousand years with the Lord are as one day. We read the verses in sweltering haste, and imagine that blow followed blow with cruel rapidity, and that weak and helpless peoples were oppressed and crushed out of existence without notice, or without chance of escape. That is our injustice towards the facts of history. Between the chapters a thousand years may lie, between the lines a millennium may elapse. The one thought governing all other thoughts is, that there is an unswerving purpose running through all the process of the ages ; and that under the development and march of that purpose all that is not of its own nature must go down. Whatever is of its own nature will be taken up, absorbed, and glorified ; but there is a stone, and one of two things happens in relation to that stone,—either fall upon it and be broken, or it will fall upon you and grind you to powder. That is the Bible of history, the Bible of prosaic, daily facts,—not a book of superstition, but pages written in the red blood of the current time.

Still pursuing the inquiry as to the Biblical theory of the unity of life and the progress of a purpose, we find that there is One spoken of in the Old Testament whose history is part of this marvel. We will not give that One a name : he shall be to us for the present a coming One, a shadow, a hint, a mysterious personality. Yet in the Bible that One is recognised above all others. Of him we read, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." That is the text in another form of words, without one tone of the solemn music omitted. A greater than Abram must now be coming. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 44).

Mark the harmony ! It is possible for harmony or consistency

to mass itself into the bulk and force of a noble argument. Throughout the Old Testament there is One coming whose way is marked by conquest. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he come whose right it is." That is the text paraphrased in sublimer eloquence. So then the Bible is one upon this point. Adam has gone down, the new Abraham, the new humanity, is before us. There is no man so little spoken of in the Bible as Adam. He seems to have gone all but utterly out of the purview of the Biblical writers. But Abraham is a name written all over the holy book. God uses it. When does God speak of Adam? There is a new humanity on the earth. Here is a direct continuance of the promise made to Abraham and the Israelites. It is thus something to find that we are not dealing with a local incident or a narrow purpose, but that we are on the high road of history, or in the direct sequence of a sublime development.

Is the harmony continued in the New Testament? Is there still One coming in that later book? We have left much behind, —tabernacle, and temple, and altar, and priesthood, and ephod, and flowing blood of ram, and lamb, and fowl of the air,—have we left behind the purpose of a new humanity? "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

This is the same principle. The Bible has never swerved; there is a common line. We are not now saying whether the line is right or wrong, we are making no special pleading on behalf of the Bible, but are endeavouring to be just to it, and from the first until the last the new humanity is to advance and all that is of its own quality is to be taken up: all that is not of its own quality is to be destroyed. The Bible argument is a massive and beneficent development. We must read the part in the light of the whole; we must interpret the Pentateuch by the Apocalypse. He who makes the end gracious will, could we follow him, also make the process gracious. We leave all that we cannot explain regarding the servile or antagonistic races to him who for a purpose created them. But there is the ethnological fact: that one type of humanity rises and

cannot be put down, and another flutters in its weakness and expires in its helplessness. All this is part of a massive and large education. It is the history of every time. There is an aspect of it which affects us with sadness, but we are not to interpret things narrowly or momentarily, but broadly and in eternal lights. There are men amongst us who must go down; there are men who cannot be put down. Were all Bibles, Churches, from this moment disregarded, the sublime and terrible fact remains of dominance and servility, the right kind and the wrong kind, and it is one of two things,—either the wrong must repent and be saved, or it must be ground to powder. For right cannot stand still. The light will slay the darkness with its million spears of glory, and a kingdom shall be established that shall explain the mystery of the conflict and the mystery of delay. We must await the incoming of that kingdom, saying, “Thy kingdom come.” We need not be destroyed. I am not now speaking of the destruction of the soul in hell-fire,—all that is another mystery which must be discussed and determined upon other ground. We have to face the one fact in this connection: that the new humanity is to advance, and that every soul that sets itself against it must go down. Why set ourselves against it? “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” The whole conception amounts to this: that One called the Son of man, the Son of God, shall have the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. His garment is dyed with blood, but it is with the blood of a victor. Truly the process is, in many respects, distressing and inexplicable, but we have nothing to do with processes. The meaning of the sharp ploughing will be seen in the harvest of grain. The deep and dark foundations so long dug for and so long in being laid will be explained by the lofty edifice and the pinnacles that pierce the sun. “We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” God’s great purpose in all this advancement and overturning is to make man in his image and likeness. From that purpose he has never swerved. We await the issue. All the parables and analogies of nature which come within our cognisance establish the purpose, and already, here and there,

by help of analogue, we begin to see how possible it is that though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy comes in the morning. As for the mystery, I leave it with him whose grace I magnify. We cannot resist the supreme purpose except to our own destruction. Everything points to a grand future. Were this all, we might laugh with rational merriment at him who calls himself Creator. But we must not arrest the process or interfere with the punctuation of history, or the method of the universe: we must calmly recognise the fact that from the beginning to the end there is one purpose never halting, never swerving, mighty to destroy, mighty to save,—meant to save, intended for good, and that will never be satisfied itself until the wilderness is blotted out by the garden and the desert is forgotten in the golden harvest. In this doctrine we stand, feeling it to be strong in philosophy, actual in history, and beneficent in design.

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#### DEATH BY HORNETS.

IN a letter by an Indian gentleman living near Jubbulpore, written to the *Times* some years since, we read:—"A most melancholy accident occurred here on the 10th inst. Two European gentlemen belonging to the Indian Railway Company, viz., Messrs. Armstrong and Boddington, were surveying a place called Bunder Coode, for the purpose of throwing a bridge across the Nerbudda, the channel of which, being in this place from ten to fifty yards wide, is fathomless, having white marble rocks rising perpendicularly on either side from 100 to 150 feet high, and beetling fearfully in some parts. Suspended in the recesses of these marble rocks are numerous large hornets' nests, the inmates of which are ready to descend upon any unlucky wight who may venture to disturb their repose. Now as the boats of these European surveyors were passing up the river, a cloud of these insects overwhelmed them; the boatmen, as well as the two gentlemen, jumped overboard; but alas! Mr. Boddington, who swam and had succeeded in clinging to a marble block, was again attacked, and being unable any longer to resist the assaults of the countless hordes of his infuriated winged foes, threw himself into the depths of the water never to rise again. On the fourth day his corpse was discovered floating on the water, and was interred with every mark of respect. The other gentleman, Mr. Armstrong, and his boatmen, although very severely stung, are out of danger."

## Exodus xxxiv. 2.

"Come up in the morning . . . and present thyself unto me in the top of the mount."

### MORNING ON THE MOUNT.

GOD wishes me to be alone with him. How solemn will the meeting be! Father and child; Sovereign and subject; Creator and creature! The distance between us will be infinite, unless he shorten it by his mercy! Oh, my poor broken and weary heart, think of it and be glad; God wants thee to meet him alone! He will heal thy wounds; he will shed his light upon thy tears, and make them shine like jewels; he will make thee young again. Oh that I might be on the mountain first, and that praise might be *waiting* for God! I will be astir before the sun; I will be far on the road before the dew rises; and long before the bird sings will I breathe my sweet hymn. Oh, dark night, flee fast, for I would see God and hear still more of his deep truth! Oh, ye stars, why stay so long? Ye are the seals of night, but it is for other light I pine, the light that shows the way to the Mount of God. My Father, I am coming; nothing on the mean plain shall keep me away from the holy heights: help me to climb fast, and keep thou my foot, lest it fall upon the hard rock. At thy bidding I come, so thou wilt not mock my heart. Bring with thee honey from heaven, yea, milk, and wine, and oil for my soul's good, and stay the sun in his course, or the time will be too short in which to look upon thy face, and to hear thy gentle voice. Morning on the mount! It will make me strong and glad all the rest of the day so well begun!

How shall I go before God? In what robe shall I dress myself? "All the fitness he requires is to feel my need of him." That I do feel. Without him I am lost. But when I think of him the thought of my great sin comes at the same time, and it is like a black cloud spread between me and the sun. When I

think of anything else, I am happy for the moment ; but when I think of God, I burn with shame and tremble with fear. I cannot answer him. His questions are judgments. In his eye there is fire that burns me. This morning I must meet him on the mount,—meet him alone ! Alone ! Alone ! Surely he need not have said expressly so ; for to be with God is to be in solitude, though the mountain be alive with countless travellers. But he bids me come ; and is not the bidding itself a promise ? Would he take me to the mount to kill me ? Is it that he may bury me in some unknown rock, that he bids me climb the steep path ? Oh, my faithless heart, these very questionings are the beginnings of sin. Why do I question God ? Why do not I arise at once, and flee to him as my soul's one delight ? It is not my humility that keeps me back, but my pride. I am not modest, I am guilty ; I will speak plainly to myself, and set my shameful fault in a burning light.

God asks me to meet him in the *top* of the mount. I am called to climb as far away from the world as I can. Surely the very place of meeting has meaning in it. For many a day I have not seen the top of the mount. I have stood on the plain, or I have gone to the first cleft, or have tried a short way up the steep. I have not risen above the smoke of my own house, or the noise of my daily business. I have said, "In my climbing I must not lose sight of my family ; I must be within call of my children ; I must not go beyond the line of vegetation ; even in religion I must be prudent." Thus I have not seen the *top*, nor have I entered into the secret place of the Most High. Oh that I might urge my way to the very top of the hill chosen of God ! "What must it be to be there ?" The wind will be music. The clouds will be as the dust of my feet. Earth and time will be seen as they are, in their littleness and their meanness. My soul, move up to the top ; let no stone be above thee ; higher and higher ; God awaits thee, God calls thee, God will give thee rest ! God means that the very climbing should do me good. He could come to me, but he bids me go to him. There is mercy in the going. There is comfort on the road. The very weariness has a promise. The mountain is measured ; God does not ask me to climb an unknown distance ; he knows my strength, and he fixes the

meeting-place within its limits. This day I will see the sacred top. The enemy will try to turn me back, but I will meet him in the strength of God, and abash him by the name of Christ. Lord, help me this day to see the very top of the mount, and let my poor soul taste the sweetness of the liberty which is assured to it in Christ.

The *morning* is the time fixed for my meeting the Lord. What meaning there is in the *time* as well as in the place! This very word *morning* is as a cluster of rich grapes. Let me crush them, and drink the sacred wine. In the morning—then God means me to be at my best in strength and hope; I have not to climb in my weakness; in the night I have buried yesterday's fatigue, and in the morning I take a new lease of energy. Give God thy strength—*all* thy strength; he asks only what he first gave. In the morning—then he may mean to keep me long that he may make me rich! In the morning—then it is no endless road he bids me climb, else how could I reach it ere the sun be set? Sweet morning! There is hope in its music. Blessed is the day whose morning is sanctified. Successful is the day whose first victory was won in prayer. Holy is the day whose dawn finds thee on the top of the mount! Health is established in the morning. Wealth is won in the morning. The light is brightest in the morning. "Wake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early."

Holy morning,—sacred day,  
Up the mountain I must climb;  
God invites me,—God awaits me,  
He hath fixed the place and time.

Early morning,—Summer day,  
I must meet my Lord alone;  
Christ, go with me,—Christ, protect me,  
Say thou didst for me atone.

Gladsome morning,—joyful day,  
On the mountain-top I'll stand;  
Spirit, help me,—Spirit, guide me,  
Spirit, lead me by the hand.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
For the mount my soul prepare;  
Then the eve shall tell in praises,  
That the morn was spent in prayer.

"Come up in the morning." A tender morning light shines upon the life of the elder saints and gives it the freshness of youth. The Bible is full of morning. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The dew of thy sorrow shall be taken up by the sun, and God shall set it in his light like a bow of hope. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord, and in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." "The Lord's mercies are new every morning." May we "pass over Jordan by morning light"! Of old "the morning stars sang together." "I, Jesus, am the bright and morning star." The Holy Book is full of the spirit of morning. No evening shadows darken it. Truly the day declines, but "at eventide there is light" where in the morning there has been converse with God. My soul, I would charge thee to be as those who watch for the morning. The morning makes the day. The Sabbath of the day is in the morning. Oh, may this morning bring me near to God! May it be the time of resurrection; an hour of immortality; a gleam of the upper light, a breath of the holy world! A morning misspent is a day ruined. A morning saved is a day completed. Lord, awake me at sunrise, and by the beauty of the coming light give hope for the whole day.

"Be ready in the morning." This is my Lord's command. On my part there is to be preparation. As the ground is tilled to receive the seed, so must my heart be made ready to receive the good word of God. I may not rush into my Lord's presence in violent haste; I must be calm, knowing well myself, feeling my unworthiness, and taking with me words of humility and reverence. He bids me come. That is my plea for going. Alas, what making "ready" I require! My thoughts are so worldly; my plans are so mean; my motives are so selfish; my affections are so entwined around unworthy objects. "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" God himself must make me ready, for "the preparation of the heart" is from heaven. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself

with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Lord, make me ready. Truly all is from the Lord. My awaking and my preparation, my desire to go, and my ability to move—these, Lord, are thine, and these show the might and the gentleness of thy holy hand. Being thus made ready, may I have grace to go forth and climb the appointed hill. Doth the bridegroom hide himself in the chamber of his preparation? Doth he not rather go forth that he may find his heart's desire and his heart's delight? So would I be made ready, and go out to the hill, and scale its utmost height. "Arise, let us go hence."

"Come up in the morning." "I will arise and go to my Father." It is not to Lebanon that he calls me, nor to the top of Shenir and Hermon, nor to "the mountains of the leopards"; it is to "mournful Calvary"—it is to the holy, tender, mighty Cross! Nothing shall keep me back. The orchard of pomegranates shall not detain me, nor will I tarry by the streams of Lebanon; I will bend my steps towards the Cross, for all my salvation is there. We shall meet where the sacred blood flows for sin. No tainted wind of earth blows through that solemn sanctuary. There I will speak of my guilt, and keep back nothing that I have done. The Lord shall see my heart of hearts, and my Saviour's blood shall cleanse my secret thoughts. To see his holiness will be to see my own corruption; then shall I tremble with fear, and my strength shall be as water poured forth, but my weakness will not be despised by the Lord. "To them that have no might he increaseth strength." He is gentle with his weary sheep. In the green pastures he leads them, and by the still waters is their quiet lot. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and he maketh his flock to rest at noon. My Lord calls me, and I will go. When I see him I will say, How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings! And when he bids me climb the still higher heights, I will be "like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Lord, help me; Lord, pity me!

The mountain on whose top I have to meet the Lord is very high. Sometimes, because of the poverty and feebleness of my faith, it seems as if I could never reach the far-away height. There are places upon the steep where I would gladly sit down, saying, It is enough: but a still small voice comes to me asking,

What doest thou here ? The Lord is on the top of the mount, and wilt thou keep him waiting as if he were thy servant ? He hath bowed the heavens and come down ; shame on thee, my soul, not to be there before thy Lord's chariot ! Oh, the seducing spirits, how they beguile me ! Oh, the cold winds, how they strike me and urge me down ! Saviour ! give thine angels charge concerning me, for thou hast made them all ministering spirits, and by their help I shall this day see the top of the sacred mount ! "Keep me this day without sin." Let me have one day's rest from evil works. Give me a sweet Sabbath of pure love and unbroken rest. One such day will make me young again. One such day shall make me forget my polluted yesterdays, and cause me by sweet foretaste to enjoy the heaven that has begun to come. Blessed are they that breathe the mountain air ! Theirs is enduring health, and the keenest joys are theirs. Bear me beyond the cold and killing fogs of earth and time, and let me breathe the pure air of liberty and heaven. I give myself to thee this day. This day I bid farewell to all that is unworthy of the Blood by which I am redeemed. Henceforward I would climb the mount of God every morning, that afterwards I may return to do the work of earth as a citizen of Holy Zion. My Father, I start for the mount this day ; may I not fail to reach the top, where thy glory rests like a tabernacle of light !

Ready in the morning, Lord,  
Ready for the mount ;  
Till the darkness flee, Lord,  
I every moment count.

Help me up the mountain, Lord—  
Help me to the top ;  
Give me strength on strength, Lord,  
When tempted sore to stop.

See, I am quite alone, Lord ;  
Sinful, seeking God ;  
But I set my feet, Lord,  
In ways my Saviour trod.

Not to a burning mount, Lord,  
But to Zion's height,  
Bid thy servant come, Lord,  
And change his faith to sight.

## Exodus xxxv. 20-29.

20. And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

21. And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

22. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold : and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.

23. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them.

24. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering : and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it.

25. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.

26. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair.

27. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate ;

28. And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

## THE POPULAR RESPONSE.

THE first nineteen verses of this chapter contain the speech which Moses delivered to the congregation of the children of Israel, being the words which the Lord himself had commanded. These nineteen verses are, indeed, a condensation of all that is reported in detail in the previous chapters which we have studied with some particularity. Our immediate concern is the answer of the people. Let the scene vividly present itself to the eyes of

our imagination. Moses has been in secret conference with the Lord in the mountain; he has received instructions of a very detailed and critical kind; he has come down and has reported to all Israel what he has heard in the tabernacle of cloud; the proposition is now fairly before the people. Wonderful, they seem to make no reply at once. That is scarcely matter of surprise. Never was speech of the kind made to mortal ears before. It seemed to overlook all time, all faculty, all opportunity, to vex and distress every line and fibre of the human soul and the human constitution. The instruction was critical up to the point of vexatiousness, and exacting up to the point of extortion. It was a frightful claim. The people seem to have paused awhile—to have gone away from Moses and to have thought over the whole matter. The twentieth verse is therefore a verse of negation; we simply read that “all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.” We have often departed from the altar; we have often left the church, saying, “Who is sufficient for these things? This altar demands much from us,—yea, it lays its voracious hand upon our whole life.” So thinking, we have left the threshold of the church, silently, somewhat sullenly, with a great wonder brooding in the heart, not being certain within ourselves whether we should have returned to hear speech so exasperating and so all-claiming. Let us be charitable to the silence of men. Perhaps they may come again not the less enthusiastically that they have gone away under the silence of a great surprise. Religion is nothing if it is not great. Were it to come to us with mean petitions, we might go back to it with meaner prayers; but religion comes claiming all, and therefore entitles us to return claiming according to the same scale; so the claim of Heaven and the prayer of men balance one another in sublime and honest equilibrium. The Lord had said long ago, “Let us make man,” so now he seems to say to man, “Let us make the tabernacle.” As there was a plural in the creation, so there is a plural in this building. God seeks human co-operation. We forget that the tabernacle is as much for men as it is for God. We call the church “the house of God,” and so it is; yet there is an obvious and deeply solemn sense in which the church is also the house of Man. We put the church away from us among the

clouds which conceal the superstitions when we think of it only as the house of God. It is that first ; but it is only God's house that it may be our house in some tenderer way. It is our Father's house. It is the only house in which man can truly see himself. In other houses he is flattered, but never in the house of God ; in other houses man sees a picture of himself, and wonders at the delicacy of the artist who could so make colour and form speak so eloquently, but in the house of God man sees himself as he really is, and what he is he only knows who has been closeted alone with God. The ignorant man does not know how ignorant he is ; so long as he keeps company with his equals, the whole earth moves tardily along one low level ; but when an ignorant man comes in contact with intelligence, the intelligence need assume no attitude of superiority—need speak in no tone of dominance. Ignorance feels itself to be little, small, contemptible, feeble. Increase the intelligence, and you increase the humiliation ; add to the intelligence, and you deepen the sense of disparity and unworthiness. What is true intellectually is, if one might so say, truer still morally. We know not what we are till we see the holiness of God. The house of God is the symbolic home ; it is the gate of heaven ; it stands—insulated by infinite sacredness, yet approachable through all holy sympathies—between time and eternity. It is neither here nor there ; it overleaps both spaces. God devised the house ; Man built it ; the house is built for two and only two,—the one the infinite God, the other the all but infinite Humanity.

When the people returned they came back with enthusiastic haste,—hearts were stirred up, hands were wide opened, the whole life had begun, the agony and the delight of sacrifice. How the answer throbs with love ! Can love be mistaken ? Is there not an accent in its voice that can be heard in no other speech ? Has it not a manner of its own ? Does it ever cease—saying, "That is enough" ? Does it keep back one bracelet, earring, jewel, skin of ram, or badger-skin ? We want less argument and more love. But love *is* an argument. We do injustice to enthusiasm when we depose it from a position amongst the logical powers and authorities. Enthusiasm is reasoning on fire—ablaze with that ardour which burns but does not consume. Coldness is the deadliest enemy. Fear the cold man more than

the atheist. He sends a chill through all the regions of the Church ; no hymn lifts him into rapture ; no view of Divine truth transfigures him or makes his raiment glisten with sparkles of light ; he is outside the fire of the most burning appeal ; yet for some inscrutable reason he is within the lines of the visible Church. The cold man is not brought up for excommunication, but he ought to be. We expel the drunkard, as we deem him to be such, though no drunkard may he be in heart ; yet we call the cold man respectable. Our discipline needs revision. The drunkard—for whom I have no word of commendation in so far as he has fallen from sobriety—may be the better man of the two. A cold professor of religion is the deadliest enemy of the Cross. His theology is formally right ; in the letter he is orthodox enough, even to satisfy geometry ; but he is heterodox in soul, he is a heretic in feeling ; the temperature of his heart shows that he may have the form of godliness but not the power. Were it given to me to appeal to all the ages of time and all the nominal followers of Christ, I think I should adopt the tone of a man who is afraid of coldness rather than of opposition, of iciness of feeling rather than of intellectual hostility. Herein the Church is fatally wrong. She will endorse the cold man and expel the earnest contemplatist and speculatist ; she lays hands on daring yet reverent speculation, and allows the cold man to lift up his hand of ice in sign of legitimate ecclesiastical authority. Better have two men in your congregation who are in burning earnest than a houseful of men whose souls are destitute of enthusiasm. You gain in weight what you lose in number ; you gain in force what you lose in show. The prayer of every devout heart should be : “ Baptise me as with fire.”

The answer of the people was marked by the spirit of willingness. Some form of the word *willing* occurs again and again : “ Every one whom his spirit made willing ” ; “ As many as were willing-hearted.” God will have nothing out of the reluctant hand. We may throw an offering down, but it is not taken up by Heaven. It evaporates downwards ; it is not received by the condescending and sympathetic sun. There are people, blessed be God, in every Christian land, who are content to find their whole joy in doing good. They say they have no higher delight ; they are inventive in beneficence ; a smile irradiates the face as

with an inner light when they have hit upon some new method of showing love and loyalty to God. The Church is large enough for all they are and have, and if its line leave any outside, they will extend the Church so as to include all things harmless, beautiful, tender, gracious; and so the Church roof shall be large as the firmament. This is the ideal towards which we should work. See what willingness implies. Being intelligent, it means conviction, saying, if not in words yet in actions, "This is right: this is the road that leads onward, upward, Godward, and we take it inch by inch,—here very steep, there almost dangerous; but this is the road." It implies self-denial. There are men—strange as the sentiment may sound in our ears—abasing all miracles into commonplaces, who do deny themselves that they may have another coal to put upon God's altar. There is no miracle Diviner than that extravagance of economy;—men who pinch themselves that the child may have another year's schooling, women who say nothing of their deprivations that they may add something to the success of some cause of progress and righteousness. There are men and women who have concentrated themselves upon what they believe to be a Divine work, and they are the men and women who make the noblest and brightest chapters in history. There may even be a touch of superstition in their veneration; submitted to a very close analysis, what they do may exhibit here and there a combination and admixture of elements hardly to be approved by an absolutely accurate chemistry; but the fire that is in them is a wondrous solvent and disinfectant, and is accepted of God, who is himself fire, as something kindred to his own eternal nature. Out of such conviction and self-denial there comes a process of education. We thus become used to certain methods and sacrifices. A habit is begun, continued, consolidated, and at last it expresses itself in new solidities of character. We cannot build a tabernacle in a day. The tabernacle is a symbol of life or it is nothing. This beautiful creation in the desert—something between a thought and a thing—is a symbol of that nobler tabernacle—human life, spirit, character; and we know that the element of time has much to do with the perfecting of the building. It takes a long time to make a fit tabernacle—it will take the time of eternity.

The answer was enthusiastic and expressed willingness, and yet it involved work of every kind. A Church must go to work if it would enjoy the spirit of unity and peace.

The answer was the deepest and truest cure of all murmuring. The people had been murmuring again and again, but the moment they began to work they ceased to complain. A new music steals into the strain of the history; we hear the motion, we observe the activity, we are astounded by the energy; and what appears to be the tumult of enthusiasm and passion settles into a deep harmony of consent and sacrifice. You would murmur less if you worked more. An evil thing is idleness. It must always sit with coldness, and the two must keep one another in evil countenance. Yet we have come to such a time in the history of things when the sons of rich men have nothing to do, and therefore they do mischief with both hands. Their fathers made the money, rendering work unnecessary, and therefore the sons rot in corruption or become enfeebled through inaction. It is the same in the Church: the great wars are all over and "the battle flag is furled." Now we have come to periods of criticism, dilettanteism, easy and self-comforting speculation; we have turned theology into a box of toys or into a chest of wooden mysteries which we open from time to time trying to fit the pieces into some reluctant unity. Persecution is dead; penalty for conviction is obsolete. We have fallen upon the evil times of theological exhaustion and luxury. Verily, we are dainty in our taste now; some men we will not hear,—without knowing them, without so much as having heard their names, we turn away in implied disgust from their offered ministry. This comes of living in periods of intellectual and theological confectionery. What is to be done? Who can tell? It is easy to go with the multitude; it is comfortable to have no convictions; it is delightful to be relieved of every duty but the pleasant one of passing criticism upon other people. The tabernacle is built, the temple is finished, theology is concluded, the last volume has been published, all the standards have been erected, and we have fallen upon the evil times of having nothing to do. We are wrong; there is more to be done now than there ever was before; every wall of the sanctuary is to be heightened,—the foundation we cannot touch, that was laid in eternity; but what room there is for enlarge-

ment, for improvement, for increase of hospitality, for growth in all noblest wisdom and sympathy! What an opportunity there is this day for the Church to stand outside her own hospitable walls and say to the sons of men, "This is your Father's house, and in it there is bread enough and to spare"! The Church includes all other houses that are at all good, or that want to be good. What is the Church to our imagination? Let there be one great central meeting-place;—but that will not suffice. Round about there must be ■ thousand little houses,—outer dependencies having direct connection with the house-fire and with the house-comfort; so near that the voice of prayer can be overheard; so near that now and again some gentle tone of celestial appeal can penetrate. All schools, all asylums that express the spirit of philanthropy, all houses devoted to the education and the culture of the human soul with all its varied mystery of faculty, should be included. I would let them all build against the Church, so that the Church should be one wall of the building; and the time may come when all the outside dependencies and attachments may be turned *inside*; then we shall know the meaning of the doctrine uttered by the sweetest of all voices: "In my Father's house are many mansions." The eternal appeal of Heaven is for service. This is the wisdom of God; he keeps us at work,—work which he lightens with pleasure, which he intermits by many a Sabbath day's enjoyment and quietude,—work which brings its own reward; work which is not service only but payment on the spot; we are rewarded by the mere doing of it. When we are in the passion of the service we feel that any other compensation than that given by service itself is unequal to the sublime occasion; it fills the soul, it enchants the spirit with highest delight; it brings the worker every eventide into the very peace and security of heaven. The one thing to be feared is stagnation. That is to be feared with all the terror possible to the human soul. Fear no opposition, fear no atheism, infidelity, unbelief, controversy,—hail it; welcome it; your enemies may be turned into your friends; but what can we do with stagnation? That is the deadliest unbelief;—disbelief as implying intellectual activity it is not, but unbelief as implying intellectual stagnation and spiritual death it is, and therefore it is the worst form of opposition to the demands of Heaven.

Better have a tumult than stagnation. Better that our services should be interrupted than that they should be conducted perfunctorily, beginning in coldness and ending in some deadlier chill. Better have war than death. Hear Heaven's sweet appeal for service, for sacrifice, and know that the appeal is not the demand of exaggeration, but that it is inspired by the very spirit of consideration for human feeling, and expresses the very philosophy of human spiritual education.

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### PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou dost pity the weak and encourage them that have no strength. Thou art known unto us as a shepherd. Thou dost carry the lambs in thine arms,—yea, thou dost hide them in thy bosom as if thou didst care for them with the solicitude of love. Their weakness is thine opportunity: they never know what a shepherd thou art until they are distressed by weariness. It is so with every soul amongst us. We do not know thee in our pride and haughtiness, in the abundance of our strength and wealth; we say then, There is no God. So thou dost chasten us and abase us with many an affliction. Thou dost bark the fig-tree and take away the one good plant, and turn all our clients and supporters away from our door; thou dost send a sharp pain into the head, and thou dost afflict every joint with rheum; and then we look around, and wonder, and cry, and ask for any man who can bring up the Samuel we have despised. We have run with the foot-men, and they have outrun us: we have tried our strength with the horses, and they have fled away far beyond us; now that the swellings of Jordan have next to be encountered we are dismayed. But thou wilt help us; even at the last, thou wilt not forsake us. Thou mightest well do so, for we have turned our backs upon thee, and have been pleased with any idol that could for the moment dazzle and fascinate our fancy. But thou art pitiful; thou wouldest rather save than destroy; thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, thou hast no pleasure in any death that is not the precursor and condition of larger life: then it is not death but some servant of thine whom thou dost employ in thine infinite household. We are wanderers, and the darkness has come on suddenly: find a rest for us. We are mariners, and all the winds of Heaven have seized upon us, and we are rolling and staggering to and fro like drunken men: Lord, give the elements charge concerning us. We live for one little day, and we ruin the generation that comes after us by foolish careful kindness. We toil and slave, and mass our wealth, and spare our young ones from toil and labour, and, behold, we have wrecked them and made fools of them. Pity us! Our kindness is a mistake; our prevision is blindness. Give us great lessons, great comforts, great blessings, in the Lord of the Cross,—the Man who shed his blood, the Saviour of the world,—mighty to save, unwilling to destroy. Amen.

### Exodus xxxviii. 8.

“And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

#### OLD THINGS TURNED TO NEW USES.

THE mirrors of the period were made of burnished brass. Women having such looking-glasses at the door of the Tent of Meeting refers to an idolatrous custom. In many ancient religions women took a leading part in some of the ceremonies. This was so in Egypt. The Israelites had no doubt observed the custom and imitated it in some degree, or part of the “mixed multitude” that went up with Israel out of Egypt may have continued the idolatrous practice. Each woman had a looking-glass made of polished brass, and that mirror was used in some way in connection with idolatrous practices. When the tabernacle was being built the women gave up their mirrors and so contributed to the formation of the laver, which was made of brass, and the foot of it of brass. Thus we have old things turned to new uses, and it is for us to say whether we shall regard this incident as a piece of ancient history, or whether we shall enter into the spirit of it and realise the action in our own day and on a broader scale. We can modernise the incident; we need not allow the centuries to gather between us and the instance of consecration. We need not smile at the ancient story; we had better seize its spiritual intent and realise its purpose in our own daily behaviour.

How came the women to give up their looking-glasses to assist in constructing the laver? Because a superior spirit had taken possession of them. That is the philosophy and that the explanation of the case. That must be the philosophy and the explanation of corresponding service upon our part. This kind of action, if it is to be of the true quality and to have real virtue and merit in

the sight of Heaven, cannot be done as a trick, or as an act of mechanism, or for the satisfaction of personal vanity, or for the purpose of being like other people; it must express the fact that into our souls there has come a new principle of living, a new purpose, a nobler spirit than we have yet entertained, and the action must show that we are ruled by considerations which deprive all temporal things of the slightest permanent value. We are too prone to make ancient history; it is a fault of ours. We might be younger if we determined not to be so old. We might see the old poetry written over again with a young hand. We might revivify all the sacred past and be rich in memory and inspiration. Is it not so that when a greater spirit takes possession of the man he is willing to attest the reality of the new occupancy by giving up that which aforesaid he valued? Great enthusiasms dispossess the soul of mean idolatries. Christ in you the hope of glory alters every standard of valuation and every test of accuracy. When a preacher has set upon his platform a little black slave-child and looking a great congregation in the face has said—Her price is so much: shall we subscribe the amount and invest the child with freedom? what has been the reply? Men have taken off their watches and chains and cast them into the treasury; women have stripped their fingers of jewellery and said, "Take the baubles and buy the child's liberty with them." That is the philosophy, and until we get some such spirit as that we shall be niggards and mean men, content with little things, careful that the temperature does not rise too high; we shall be the victims of prudence, we shall not know the sovereignty and Divinity of purest passion.

This is not to be accomplished by mere argument in words. The soul must see its own Divine sights and hear the call addressed specially to itself; it must feel the glow of a new love, the appeal of a grand challenge; it must answer in its own way without heeding the judgment or fearing the contempt of others. We cannot do the greatest actions in life as mere duties. Duty is a measurable term: it begins and ends; it has appointed days, stipulations, covenants; it goes by weights, scales, and measures. A great life can never be founded upon the mere discharge of mechanical duty. There is a conception of duty which takes up all the elements that are necessary to

constitute and preserve a Divine enthusiasm ; but I am dealing now with the every-day conception—*quid pro quo*, the so much for so much, and that is the spirit of the hireling, and it never can end in enthusiasm, consecration, Calvary. What then is the spirit that is to enter into us ? None other than the spirit of Christ. We might use many words in describing the spirit, but all the words would focalise themselves at last in this sublime expression—"For Christ's sake." When Christ enters into a man and takes full possession of him, the world is not worth fighting for ; time is so small as to be unmeasurable, and all the prizes of life are leaves that wither in the plucking. Argument can never do this ; creed and dogma and written form of faith can never do it. Men cannot be followers of mere *isms*, and impersonalities, and abstract propositions. There are those who seek to quench the spirit of individuality. They do not want mere personal following to be the rule of religious life ; they would have men live for an *ism*, an abstract statement. This can never be done. We are so constituted that personality rules our thinking, stirs our enthusiasm, brings to consecration our hesitating, inquiring, and reluctant will. The highest personality is Christ. We follow him, and in proportion as we follow him all things we possess are his. We feel heaven enough in the realisation of the fact that he is willing to accept and use them.

There is room in the sanctuary for everything. This is the point we have so often missed in our Christian teaching. No punishment is burning enough for the men who would belittle God's house. They are the plague of every ministry, they are the obstruction of every kingdom that is righteous and pure, are those who would limit the Holy One of Israel. What have you ? You have nothing that cannot be used in the building of God's house and kingdom. Have you nothing but the little looking-glass ? It can be used. Is yours, on the other hand, but one small flower which a child could pluck ? It was God's flower before it was yours, and he will never consent to lose a flower ; it cost him thought and care and love ; he dressed the flower as Solomon never could dress himself. Are yours very great faculties ? They will be small enough in relation to the kingdom which is Christ's and the house which is God's. Many a great

man feels himself much contracted when he comes into the infinite kingdom of Christ. The faculties which dazzled the senate are hardly seen in the Church—always provided that the term *Church* is defined in the largest and truest way. This will be seen some time. Meanwhile, the standard of valuation is different, and men “dressed in a little brief authority,” rebuke wandering people who stop public religious services. When the men who so act—as George Fox acted—begin to explain themselves, the illustrious quacks call the speech nonsense. Are you a statesman? What a field there is in the Church for you! Here is your opportunity—a world to liberate, a world to illuminate, a world to bless;—a world? *one* world?—ten thousand worlds, when measured by the generations which rapidly and passionately succeed one another in the passage to eternity! How is your statesmanship being employed? In building paper walls? In outwitting rivals and competitors—struggling for a prize that will perish before it is reached? A vain and mean life! Let the Church (truly defined) never be ashamed to claim for herself the grandest function which human genius and human strength can exercise. Have you music—some gift of touch, some gift of voice,—the faculty of rendering thought into the eloquence of music? What a field there is in the Church for you!—for the pure man to pronounce pure words, for the soul to sing as well as the throat and the lips—to sing the world up to heaven’s gate—the weary, sighing, broken-hearted world. Who will exclude the musician from the Church? He must be brought inside, though the elder brother be offended much by the music and dancing. Better the elder brother be offended than that the passion of love and gratitude be extinguished in the soul. The elder brother must not rule us.

The time has come when men must settle this question. What spirit is to rule the Church?—the spirit of ice—if ice can be said to have a spirit—or the spirit of fire? The man of ice must be put out: he must be excommunicated as worse than a heretic and a most mischievous form of hypocrite. What is your talent? Is it a faculty of amusing men? We want you. This poor human life needs occasional recreation and gentle withdrawal from studies that would afflict it by the very profoundness of their solemnity. The child wants you—the little

child all dimples, the little life all dream and laughter; that little creature does not want the theologian, the philosopher, the dogmatist. There is every kind of life upon the face of the earth and within the compass of the government of God, and each must be attended to according to its degree and quality and compass. The Church must consecrate its laughter; it must turn its very amusement into an instrument of religious use and blessedness. Nothing is to be turned away from the Church, except that which is impure, untrue, vicious, mean, and debasing.

Bright will be the day when all faculties which are now employed in mischief are employed in doing good. There are clever men on the bad side—men who could triumph over some of us in many departments of human skill—who are giving all their time and attention to the service of the Evil One. We want all their faculties; we must make room for their exercise. If the men say, We cannot exercise our faculties within the lines of the Church, then somebody has taken away from the amplitude of the Church, and room must be found for every man who is willing to consecrate his faculties to the true enlightenment, advancement, comfort, civilisation, and progress of mankind.

There are others to whom an appeal may be fittingly addressed—namely, those who are using great powers for little purposes or unworthy ends. Is it worth your while to carve heads upon cherry-stones? Taking all things into account, is it worthy of your power and dignity to be found running errands that are without a purpose, casting vessels into empty wells and drawing nothing up? Is there nothing better for you to do than to be throwing water into a sieve all day long and finding it empty at eventide? There may be no absolute mischief in what you are doing, but the faculties could be turned to positive beneficence—real, sound, healthy, good-doing, and when so turned the day is without a cloud, the time of cessation comes too soon, and as for the wages, they are paid in every stroke of the work.

Many entertain the hope that a day will come when all things will be turned to the building and consolidation of God's kingdom. Prophecy encourages us to take that view. As for Christ—

"Kings shall fall down before him,  
And gold and incense bring."

All kings shall bow to him, and own that their kingdoms are his

rather than theirs. It is promised that he shall be known as King of kings, Lord of lords ; men shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, with gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and offer them as tributes too small to majesty so great.

Blessed will be the day when the breweries of the country are turned into mechanics' institutes, great sanitary establishments for the washing and cleansing of the people. Blessed will be the day when the rich man's saloons shall be thrown open to the poorest neighbours he has who will come to look at his articles of *vertu*,—who will turn over his curiosities and examine them with honest fingers, and so admire them as to be touched into desire for broader life. Blessed—bright will be the day when in that sense we shall have all things common ; when the strong man's strength shall be the weak man's refuge ; when the homeless shall have a large home in the charity and love of his richer brother ; when the one object of every heart will be to extend the happiness of mankind,—the one question in the morning being, What good can be done to-day ? and the one question at eventide, What good has been accomplished ? My persuasion is that if ever that time is to be brought about, it can only be by the extension of the spirit of Jesus Christ. He turned every man's faculties to use ; he found a place for every man in his *clientèle* he turned none away, saying—"In the formation of my kingdom I never anticipated peculiarities and gifts like yours." I know of no teacher with so keen a vision, so large a heart, so tender a sympathy, so noble a priestliness. This I say of him as a mere character in history without approaching him along any theological lines ; but meeting him on the open highway of civilisation and listening to him, I say, "My Lord and my God, no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." If I withheld that tribute from his gentle majesty, it would be because I had suppressed the purest passion that ever inflamed and ennobled my heart.

Taking the Christian view, all becomes larger still and brighter, and the hope is given that one day everybody will be in the kingdom, and every man, woman, and child will be doing their very best to make that kingdom what God means it to be. The

great men, by heroic strength, by dauntless valour, will carry on their sublime occupation; the patient women—gentle souls, having the genius of sympathy and the faculty of interpreting by suffering—will contribute their important, their ineffably valuable share; and little children will make up the sum total of the consecration. They can say nothing, but they can laugh us out of despair; they cannot preach, but they can hug the Cross with a trust that ought to be full of significance to us. All people serving the Saviour, all houses consecrated to the Son of God, and the whole earth, casting out the devil and his hell, shall have no room in all its radiant hue but for the Christ of God. “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

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#### NOTE.

THE Hebrew women on coming out of Egypt probably brought with them mirrors like those which were used by the Egyptians, and were made of a mixed metal, chiefly copper, wrought with such admirable skill, says Sir G. Wilkinson, that they were “susceptible of a lustre, which has even been partially revived at the present day, in some of those discovered at Thebes, though buried in the earth for many centuries. The mirror itself was nearly round, inserted into a handle of wood, stone, or metal, whose form varied according to the taste of the owner. Some presented the figure of a female, a flower, a column, or a rod ornamented with the head of Athor, a bird, or a fancy device; and sometimes the face of a Typhonian monster was introduced to support the mirror, serving as a contrast to the features whose beauty was displayed within it.” With regard to the metal of which the ancient mirrors were composed there is not much difference of opinion. Pliny mentions that anciently the best were made at Brundisium, of a mixture of copper and tin or of tin alone. Praxiteles, in the time of Pompey the Great, is said to have been the first who made them of silver, though these were afterwards so common, as, in the time of Pliny, to be used by the ladies’-maids. They are mentioned by Chrysostom among the extravagances of fashion, for which he rebuked the ladies of his time, and Seneca long before was loud in his denunciation of similar follies. Mirrors were used by the Roman women in the worship of Juno. In the Egyptian temples, says Cyril of Alexandria, it was the custom for the women to worship in linen garments, holding a mirror in their left hands and a sistrum in their right, and the Israelites, having fallen into the idolatries of the country, had brought with them the mirrors which they used in their worship.—*Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible.*

## “HANDFULS OF PURPOSE,” FOR ALL GLEANERS.

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“*And see . . . why.*”—Exod. iii. 3.

What serious man is always inclined to do.

What curious man is too prone to do.

What flippant man finds it impossible to do.

The spirit of the inquirer determines the result of the inquiry.—Surprises on the journey of life should awaken religious interest.—To the attentive eye the so-called continuity of law or sequence is continually interrupted.—Phenomena, so called, are as perplexing as the essence of matter itself.—There is an unknowable point in phenomena as well as in essences.—From the right heart nothing will be withheld that is good for it.—There are incidents in our life which appear to be greater than ourselves, or to challenge in us faculties which are either not present, or have not yet been awakened.—Men should not run away from great sights.—Nothing is to be gained by cowardice.—Always distinguish between flippant rashness and daring reverence.

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“*Certainly I will be with thee.*”—Exod. iii. 12.

The thoughts which arise in connection with this inspiring assurance are such as ought to touch our life at every

point.—God is the unchanging One.—As he had been with Moses, so he promised to be with Joshua; and so from age to age he is the inspiration and strength of his moral creatures.—Take this assurance as applying to the whole service of sanctified life, and it entitles us to draw four practical inferences:—I. “*Certainly I will be with thee.*”—*Then man is servant, not master.*—He should know his place, or he can never keep it.—As servant, he should (1) constantly *consult* his Master; (2) constantly *speak in the name* of his Master; and (3) constantly be jealous of *the honour* of his Master.—II. “*Certainly I will be with thee.*”—*Then the work must succeed.*—What is the guarantee of success?—(1) *Not human cleverness*; ministers may be clever, so may churches, etc.; we may have *learned* sermons, *able* sermons, *ingenious* sermons, etc.; (2) *not skilful organisation*.—Cards, bazaars, registers, circulars, etc., all useless as *ends*.—(3) *The word of the Lord* is the guarantee of success.—“*The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*”; “*My word shall not return unto me void.*”—III. “*Certainly I will be with thee.*”—*Then the servant is to be received for the Master's sake.*—“*He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*”—The true minister carries a blessing with him.—The Romans were to receive

Phebe in the Lord.—What a lesson to ministers—they are representatives of God!—IV. "Certainly I will be with thee."—*Then there need be no lack of grace or power.*—"If any man lack wisdom," etc.—"Lo, I am with you alway," etc.—"Ye have not, because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss."—The servants may take counsel of one another, but not to the interruption of continuous and trustful prayer to the Master.—(1) God is with his servants for their *comfort*; (2) for their *guidance*; (3) for their *safety*.

Application—Notice (1) the *individuality* of the promise, "I will be with thee"—with the one man; (2) the *emphasis* of the promise—"Certainly." Who is with *us* in our life-ministry?

"I know not the Lord."—EXOD. v. 2.

A kind of agnosticism more prevalent than agnosticism of a scientific kind.—There is an agnosticism of the heart; there is an agnosticism of the will.—Men reason foolishly about this not-knowing.—Men imagine that because they know not the Lord, the Lord knows not them.—This is a vital distinction.—We do not extinguish the sun by closing our eyes.—If men will not inquire for God in a spirit worthy of such an inquiry they can never know God.—Pharaoh's no-knowledge was avowed in a tone of defiance. It was not an intellectual ignorance, but a spirit of moral denial.—Pharaoh practically made himself God by denying the true God.—This is the natural result of all atheism.—Atheism cannot be a mere negative; if it pretend to intelligence it must, in some degree, involve the godhead of the being who presumes to deny God; the greatest difficulty is with people who know the Lord and do not obey

him.—If they who professedly know the Lord would carry out his will in daily obedience and sacrifice of the heart, their lives would constitute the most powerful of all arguments.

"But he said, *Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.*"—EXOD. v. 17.

A religious sentiment foolishly accounted for.—Men judge others by themselves.—When religion is of no consequence to them, they cannot imagine its being of any importance to others.—Religious exercises are supposed to be associated with idleness. This is a sophism; this is also a vulgarity.—The popular delusion is that engagement in religious exercises takes nothing out of the strength and vigour of the worshipper.—The truth is, that an exercise of a religious kind, if it be of the true quality, leaves a man wholly prostrate—inflicting upon him the greatest spiritual and physical loss.—The reaction is of an edifying and inspiring kind; but so far as the man himself is concerned, if he has truly worshipped, he has gone out of himself, and to that extent has exhausted himself.—We must not take other people's account of our religious inspirations.—We must not be laughed out of our enthusiasm.—Nothing is easier than to divert the mind from the right cause or motive of action, and to trouble the soul with suspicions of its own integrity.—It is useless to attempt to disprove such accusations by mere words.—Words are accounted as idle as religious exercises by the people who live a worldly and shallow life. Such people attach no moral value to words. They themselves are false in every fibre of their nature.—There are not wanting to-day journalists, critics, sneerers, who account for

all religious sentiment, emotion, and activity on some narrow and frivolous ground.—Churches must not be deterred by what mockers say.

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*"And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."—Exod. vi. 3.*

The different appearances of Jehovah.—The marvellous fact that he has been made known by different names.—This circumstance should put an end to all sectarian controversy.—Religion is not a matter of mere name, but of spiritual reality.—The word is unquestionably important, but only important as indicating something which is behind it, and infinitely greater than itself.—Men know the Lord under different forms and representations.—The thing to be remembered is that it is the same Lord.—The particular point of this text is that the men themselves referred to knew God by different names. At first they knew him as GOD ALMIGHTY, but they had no knowledge of the name JEHOVAH.—Does it follow, then, that the Lord was not Jehovah because the patriarchs did not know him by that designation?—We grow in spiritual consciousness as we grow in grace and in knowledge.—The mind seems to awaken to the power of describing God by new appellations, and worshipping him under enlarging and ennobling forms.—God has many a name, and he reveals himself to men by what name he pleases to adopt.—Jesus Christ has revealed himself to some thinkers as a man; to other thinkers he has revealed himself as God the Son.—These views may be used in one of two ways—either as beginning a controversy which can

never end, or as suggesting the infinite fulness of the Being who can represent himself under names of limitation and names of infinity.—Do not let us quarrel about the mere name.—Many a man may be under the Godship of Christ, who is unable metaphysically to affirm the Godhead of the Son.—Names and words in this connection must be thoroughly well defined and understood before they are turned into weapons of controversy and assault.

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*"They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."—Exod. vi. 9.*

How religion is sometimes placed at a disadvantage!—Men's social circumstances disqualify them for listening to sublime appeals.—Poor people are in no mood to listen to speculation; even the word of hope falls mockingly on the ear of men who have grievous burdens to carry.—Sometimes social condition is to be improved before religious instruction can be effectively given.—The condition of the body greatly affects the temper of the spirit.—A wounded spirit who can bear?—By long ill-usage man is disqualified for religious action. We must therefore be patient with men. We do not all start from the same point in our spiritual education. We must wait for the weak ones; we must adapt our tone to those whose lives have been sunk in black despair.—Some news appears to be too good because of the low condition of those who receive it.—No wonder the world itself was startled almost into mockery by the announcement that God had appeared to redeem it.—Preachers should not imagine that their people are all as well prepared as themselves to go forward in the noblest pursuits.—

He is most Divine who is most patient with the suffering and the weak.—When Jesus Christ announced the forgiveness of sins, the people were shocked at the very Gospel that should have been their supreme joy.

"*These are the Moses and Aaron.*"—

Exod. vi. 27.

Particular circumstances by which men may be distinguished. — Moses and Aaron are special names to us, but they might have had contemporaries who bore the same names.—Men may have the same names and yet very different natures and functions.—Every man should have a certain name indicating spiritual education, position, and influence.—The Christian Church should be distinguished as that Church by which light is increased, charity is distributed, and life is ennobled.—Whenever any difficulty arises as to the identity of men or institutions, those men and institutions should instantly be known by the breadth of their spiritual life and the reality of their generous service to the world.—It will be of little use to be known as that Church with the long creed, that Church with the heavy purse, that Church with the brilliant intellectual ability;—all these qualifications may attach to a worldly institution: the Church of Christ is to be known as that Church which is strong in sacrifice and infinite in sympathy.

"*When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you.*"

—Exod. vii. 9.

The world has certain rights in reference to the Church. The world is at liberty to call upon the Church to prove its inspiration.—It is not enough for any Church to say that it can work

miracles; it must prove the saying by the action.—Christianity is the great miracle-working power. Christianity never does anything but miracles.—The mischief is that we have affixed to the term *miracle* a narrow signification, and have declared that miracles have ceased.—This is a profound misconception.—The presence of Christianity in the world is itself a miracle. Every man who is turned from darkness to light is a living miracle.—Every life that is turned round from going in one direction to going in another direction illustrates the miraculous energy of Christian inspiration.—It is better to show living miracles than to be clever in logical arguments.—The world is not to be convinced by controversy, but by the higher kind of miracles,—change of spirit, temper, disposition, purpose; that change is known by the Scriptural name *regeneration* or the new birth—a name which ought never to be surrendered; there is none like it for range and expressiveness.—Even if the world can show miracles of its own, there must be a point of superiority in Christian miracles which will instantly and finally decide the competition.—Never disallow the power of education or of social custom to work certain wonders in human character and purpose. Nothing is to be gained by such denial. Such denial would, indeed, be unjust.—The power of Christianity is to transcend such wonders by sublimer miracles.

"*If thou refuse . . . I will smite.*"—

Exod. viii. 2.

Thus the parts of life are linked together.—Disobedience is not a self-contained act.—Man must not imagine that he has no correspondence in heaven.—What man does is important

as bearing moral consequences.—Man has undoubtedly the liberty to refuse, but he has no liberty in the region of law. Law follows in its own consequences whatever man may do.—This is not to be regarded as an arbitrary infliction. The law tells equally in both ways: obedience is blessed as certainly as disobedience is punished.—Man must not therefore excuse himself on account of the supposed arbitrariness of the Divine law. It is not arbitrary: it is rational in its foundations and equal in its operations.—This is no mere threatening: it is simply the announcement of a settled ordinance of nature. It belongs as much to the physical world in degree as to the spiritual world.—If a man refuse to sow seed he will reap no harvest; if a man refuse to open his windows he will receive no sunlight into his house; if a man refuse to take proper food and exercise his health will be smitten.—All this is not severe: it is really the active and protective side of beneficence.

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*"And he hearkened not unto them."*—  
EXOD. viii. 19.

The man spoken of is Pharaoh, and the men to whom reference is made were his own magicians.—There came a time in the spiritual history of Pharaoh when he declined the teaching of his own monitors in this matter.—Paganism has its difficulties as well as Christianity. It must not be supposed that the Christian is the only religion which is disbelieved: Pharaoh gave up his own magicians.—Men sometimes give the lie to nature, disobeying every one of her laws, and seeking to invent universes of their own.—It is not uncommon also for experience to be dismissed by men who have imagined that its lessons are

narrow and insufficient or hesitating in their moral deductions.—Not only have nature and experience been thus deposed, but history itself has been treated as an idle tale.—When nature, experience, and history have had to suffer these things at the hands of their supposed followers, what wonder if the men who have treated such teachers so should have treated the Gospel message with contempt and spurning?—When a man treats all teachers in so high-handed a manner, he assumes practical godhead.—We are not at liberty to conduct our own education without hint or service from others.—If we take to this course, we shall conduct ourselves towards exhaustion.—The wise learner looks outward, upward, Godward, insisting that his earth shall be warmed by no meaner fire than the sun.

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*"And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh."*—EXOD. viii. 20.

God is always before men. However early we rise, God is waiting for us.—The Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world.—We never can surprise God by a new necessity, or baffle him by the agony of an unexpected pain.—The Church should take a lesson from this consideration. It should watch the movements of men, and always be ahead of them and waiting for them, and surprise them by Christian appeals where such appeals are least expected.—The Church cannot begin its labours too early in the day.—The message from Heaven is always in time and in place.—Every engagement of life may be legitimately interrupted by the direct messages of Heaven.—The Church has been too particular in studying the convenience

of the persons to whom it has been sent in the name of Heaven.—Interrupt everything, that the Gospel may be delivered.—Have no fear of the greatest; whatever his importance in life it is transcended by the importance of messages that are sent by God himself.

*"Only ye shall not go very far away."*—

Exod. viii. 28.

This was a stipulation made by Pharaoh.—He had been plagued into some concession.—This is the language of compromise—the common language of all time.—Men are generous with a reservation. This was Pharaoh's policy.—In many cases religion is to be respected, but is not to cost anything.—Some people use this language when they are giving a kind of permission to faith; they say, "It may go so far, but no farther." It is not to go very far away from what can be seen and handled; it is to be as a tethered bird unable to fly beyond its check.—Some people use the same language to the spirit of Consecration. It must not go very far away from the market-place and from the common courses of society; it must never become a passion, a heroism, a burning sacrifice.—People keep themselves very much within themselves, not knowing that self-control reaches its highest discipline in the absolute giving away of the whole life to the care and service of God.

*"One plague more."*—Exod. xi. 1.

God always teaches by repetition.—One plague might have been forgotten, and another and another might have gone into oblivion.—God must so assail our lives that we can never forget the tremendous onslaught.—God

has to work a memory of recompense and judgment in the life of men.—Nothing so easy to forget as judgment when it is overpast.—So God works with repetition and severity of scourge, so that often when the pain has departed the mark of the chastisement may remain.—God can always send one plague more. The worst has never come.—Jesus Christ said: Go thy way and sin no more, lest a worst thing befall thee!—God has never dealt this heaviest stroke; the most terrible of his scourges has yet to be inflicted. God is a *consuming* fire;—not only a thread of fire, or a string of flame, or a spark of heat, but a fire that can destroy both body and soul.—All these plagues show the greatness of the sinner as well as the resources of God.—God does not deal thus with beasts.—It is worth while saving man even by judgment.—God will spare nothing that can be turned in the direction of reclaiming and restoring his lost image.—We see as much what estimate God sets upon the value of human nature by the fear which he excites as by the hope which he inspires.

*"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."*

—Exod. xii. 2.

God is the Ruler of time.—We do not invent years and months and weeks. These are really, when searched into, the creations and appointments of the Divine power.—New days are new opportunities. New days enable us to forget the evil of all yesterdays.—Consider the dawning year in this light, and the opening day.—The true birthday of a man is the day on which his soul was born into a purer and nobler life. A birthday

may be determined by a vow. The birthday of the body is the poorest of all anniversaries.—When the great idea entered the mind, inspiring and ennobling it, and filling it with Divine enthusiasm, the man was truly born.—We are entitled to date our existence from our regeneration, otherwise our memory might become an intolerable torment.—Regeneration destroys the recollections of remorse.—Man is breaking a Divine ordinance when he goes beyond the day of his re-creation, and insists upon making alive again all the iniquities that corrupted and degraded his earliest life.—Beautiful is the word *beginning*. It is one of the first words in the Bible. God himself alone could have invented that word. It is a dewy term; it is tender with the brightness of morning; it is beautiful with the bloom of heaven; a very holy and most helpful word.—Blessed is the man who knows he has begun his life again, and who can confidently date his best existence from a point in time which separates him from every evil and accusing memory.

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*"And he called for Moses and Aaron by night."*—Exod. xii. 31.

What men are always doing.—It is not enough to have a religion or a conviction for the daytime.—Our religious convictions must be large enough to include the whole circle of existence.—Were life a summer day and one steady pulse of health, a certain kind of religion might be made to do; were life one gloomy night and one continued consciousness of pain, another kind of religion might be wanted. Were life eternal youth or endless old age, such a condition would require special treatment.—Life is a mixed quantity; darkness—light,

youth—age, enthusiasm—coldness, wealth—poverty; all these and infinitely more elements enter into its composition; and only a religion at least as large as itself can come to such life with any hope of doing it permanent good.—Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron by night; ministers are most wanted when the darkness is deepest.—Darkness is always a mystery to the superstitious mind.—Moses and Aaron are always prepared to go, whether by night or by day; their message is always in season.—No invitation addressed to ministers or churches should be declined, if there is in it the faintest sign of sincerity.—A conversion wrought at night may be as good as a conversion wrought at noonday.—Nicodemus went to Jesus by night, and the blessed Christ showed the inquiring rabbi all the stars of God.—Do not put off sending until night; begin early in the day.—A whole life consecrated to heavenly pursuits will drive away the night, and it may be said of such a life as is said of the heavenly world, "There is no night there."—God uses darkness as an instrument of fear.—The ministry of Christ in the world would be incomplete if it did not appeal to the fear as well as to the hope of man.—That is, indeed, the poorest of the appeals; but it is essential in order to make up the completeness of the holy ministry, which seeks to excite the attention and save the lives of men.

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*"And a mixed multitude went up also with them."*—Exod. xii. 38.

This may be taken as a sign of mercy.—God permits men to work along the line of their impulses, even when they cannot justify those impulses by natural right or by technical

argument.—Impulses to go with the people of God ought never to be repelled; out of those impulses something better may come.—We must not be too curious in inquiring into the metaphysical reasons of human action. When that action points in the right direction, we should accept it, and afterwards begin and continue the work of spiritual education. In the meantime it ought to be accounted a sign of hopefulness that men are inclined to go to church, to listen to preaching, or take any interest in spiritual activities.

This may also be taken in mitigation of judgment of a severe kind often passed upon the Church.—They are not all Israel that are called Israel; neither are they all Christians that follow the Christian standard. We must always distinguish between the true Israel and the mixed multitude. Time will separate them by teaching them.—It is of the nature of evil that it must destroy itself, and it is of the nature of life, rooted in God, that it must grow and bloom eternally.—Men are not judges.—Wherever a man proves himself to be bad and to be acting the bad man's part, he unchurches himself without any formal and penal excommunication.

There is a sense in which the Church itself is a mixed multitude. Take it, for example, in the light of spiritual attainments.—We are not all upon one level.—In the Church there are great scholars and poor learners; some are far advanced and others are toiling at the alphabet.—Take it in the matter of disposition.—It is not equally easy for all men to be religious. It is not equally easy for all men to be generous.—Where the difficulty is greatest, the sincerity may be of a very pure kind.—Take it in the matter of individual action.—Probably no

human action is free from some kind of suspicious motive.—Our motives are a mixed multitude.—We often have to go by majorities, even in our personal considerations and decisions; we have to marshal a mixed multitude of thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears.—Herein is the delicacy of life, and herein the necessity for a discerning judgment and a sound discipline.

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*"Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."*—Exod. xiii. 10.

Memory needs to be vivified.—We pursue this kind of practice in our own household life.—The recurring birthday is a recurring joy.—Every child in the family has its own method of celebrating its nativity.—Great mercies should create their own anniversaries.—It is well to sanctify our time by religious recollections and consecrations.—There is no need to fall into superstition in this matter.—We may be but sparing ourselves when we relax our religious discipline on the ground that religious observances may become superstitions.—Every act of life is capable of debasement; but it does not therefore follow that life should be without action, and particularity of observance and ceremonial. The Church is a help to remembrance, so is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.—We ourselves are at liberty to set up milestones by the road, and to set aside special days for the remembrance of particular acts of providential revelation and care.—Every line in the diary should have in it something of God.—There is a deep spiritual sense in which every day is a birthday, and every morning a new year.—They use time well who find in it many new points of newness—that is, chances of being better and

opportunities of rendering wider service.—By indicating a special day, God lays down a law rather than fixes a technical statute: the law being that days may be marked according to their position in what may be termed the religious calendar—the diary of the soul.

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*"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."—Exod. xiii. 17-19.*

God's mercy is continued beyond the mere act of deliverance.—God does not sit down outside the gate saying, "You are now free, do all the rest for yourselves."—Little acts follow great deeds in the wondrous economy of the Divine providence.—There is a preventative ministry in the government of life.—Near cuts to the goal are often dangerous cuts; to go across country instead of round by the proper circuit may appear to be very clever and successful, but it is only the cleverness and the success of suicide.—Do not consider that we are out of the road because the road seems to be longer than it might have been.—Often better to be in the wilderness than to be in the battlefield.—God so orders his providence that men have services

to render which considerably assist the detection of the path of duty. The services may be of an incidental and indirect kind, and may not always be accredited with their proper bearing and influence in life.—Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.—The carriage of the bones of Joseph had much to do with the progress of Israel in the wilderness.—The solemnity of a vow was upon Israel.—A dying man had given a direct charge to the children of Israel and had received an oath, and that oath was amongst the people as an inspiration, an encouragement and a discipline.—God thus often charges our lives with sacred ministries which have an incidental bearing upon the steadiness of our course. We have made promises, or entered into engagements, or signed covenants, or done something which comes up again and again in the life and says, "You are bound to go forward; you cannot retreat without falsehood and cowardice."

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*"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."—Exod. xiii. 19.*

A very simple thing it appears to be to us that Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.—The circumstance is full of poetry and moral significance.—Do not we all carry with us the bones of the past? This is the very pith of history.—If we did not take the past with us the present would be a continual disappointment,—a line coming and going without bringing with it any opportunity of service and enlargement of soul.—Much depends upon our conscious and intelligent relation to the past.—We ought to

have brought a good deal with us from all the centuries that are gone.—If we have come up out of them empty-handed, we have by so much turned the counsel of God to non-effect.—Every wise heart is carrying up with it memories, vows, oaths, traditions, sacred impressions, and is under the responsibility of trusteeship to the future to be faithful to all the highest claims of the past. Poor is he who has no history behind him.—He becomes the victim of every combination of circumstances; the dupe of every tempter that assails his heart with unfamiliar and lying promises.—To carry up the past may steady our whole movement and give it dignity in times of fear and depression.—However little we may be in ourselves, we are charged as messengers of Heaven to carry on certain work and to connect transient periods of time and so assist in the consolidation of human history.—On the other hand we must guard against the worship of ancestry which is founded upon mere superstition.—We do not carry the *bones* of Joseph, we honour his service and redeem our own pledge.—What *bones* all Christians have to carry!—Think of all the heroes, witnesses, martyrs, and confessors of the past, and let the humblest Christian pilgrim realise that he has it distinctly in his charge to carry forward such histories and testimonies to the age that is to follow.—Whatever Israel carried through the wilderness derived importance from the fact that it was associated with the bones of Joseph.—Those bones kept Israel from going back to Egypt.—When Israel reeled in its purpose and thought of returning to the land of tyranny the question would arise again and again, What are we to do with the bones which we promised to carry up and to protect by burial in

another land?—By many curious lines and ties does God bind us down to the fulfilment of our destiny.—The record is not all written in plain letters; many an invisible line now and then comes into sight to show us that under all the great letters which the naked eye can see there are writings and meanings which are only disclosed to patient waiting and scrutiny.

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"My father's God."—Exod. xv. 2.

These words are taken from the song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they saw Pharaoh and his hosts overthrown in the Red Sea.—It was surely an era in their history to see the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.—Such epochs in human life should have some moral meaning.—They should not be allowed to pass without celebration.—There is a time to sing,—surely it is the hour of deliverance from the terrible foe.—Music is the natural expression of joy. A song is the proper conclusion of a victory.—Fasting is the worship of sorrow; singing is the worship of joy.—The words specially chosen for meditation show that the victory did not end in itself; it touched the holy past; it consummated the promises and hopes of ages;—in this song, therefore, the voices of the sainted dead are heard as well as the voices of the triumphant and joyous living.

What are the ideas with which this expression is charged?—1. "My father's God."—*Then religion was no new thing to them.*—They were not surprised when they heard the name of God associated with their victory.—Religion should not be an originality to us; it should not be a novel sensation; it should be the common breath of our

daily life, and the mention of the name of God in the relation of our experiences ought to excite no mere amazement.—2. “My father’s God.”—*Then their father’s religion was not concealed from them.*—They knew that their father had a God.—There are some men amongst us of whose religion we know nothing until we are informed of the same by public advertisement.—It is possible not to suspect that a man has any regard for God until we see his name announced in connection with some religious event.—We cannot read this holy book without being impressed with the fact that the men who made the history of the world were men who lived in continual communion with the spiritual and unseen. Religion is the *exception* in some of our lives,—it was the great and beneficent rule of theirs.—Is it possible that your *child* is unaware that you have a God? Is it possible that your servants may be ignorant of the existence of your religion?—3. “My father’s God.”—*Yet it does not follow that the father and the child must have the same God.*—Religion is not hereditary.—You have power deliberately to sever the connection between yourself and the God of your fathers.—It is a terrible power! Let that be clearly understood, lest a man should torment himself with the thought that he must inherit his father’s God as he inherits his father’s gold.—You may turn your face towards the heavens, and say with lingering and bitter emphasis, “Thou wast my father’s God, but I shut thee out of my heart and home!”—4. “My father’s God.”—*Then we are debtors to the religious past.*—There are some results of goodness we inherit independently of our own will.—This age inherits the civilisation of the past.—The child is the better for his father’s temperance.—Mephibosheth received honours for

Jonathan’s sake.—The processes of God are not always consummated in the age with which they begin.—Generations may pass away, and then the full blessing may come.—We are told that some light which may be reaching the earth to-day, started from its source a thousand years ago.—What is true in astronomy is also true in moral processes and events; to-day we are inheriting the results of martyrdoms, sacrifices, testimonies, and pledges which stretch far back into the grey past of human history.

The text should convey a powerful appeal to many hearts.—It is a pathetic text.—Say “My God,” and you have solemnity, grandeur, majesty, and every element that *can* touch the reverence and wonder of man; but say “My *father’s* God” and you instantly touch the tenderest chord in the human heart: God is brought to your fireside, to your cradle, to the bed of your affliction, and to the core of your whole home-life.—The text impels us to ask a few practical questions.—1. Your father was a Christian,—are *you* so much *wiser* than your father that you can afford to set aside his example?—There are some things in which you are bound to improve upon the actions of your father; but are you quite sure that the worship of the God of heaven is one of them?—2. Your father was a holy man, will you undertake *to break the line of a holy succession*?—Ought not the fame of his holiness to awaken your own religious concern?—Are you prepared to make yourself the turning-point in the line of a pious ancestry?—Beware lest you say in effect, “For generations my fathers have trusted in God and looked to him for the light of their lives, but now I deliberately disown their worship and turn away from the God they

loved."—This you can say if you be so minded!—God does not force himself upon you.—You may start a pagan posterity if you please.—3. Your father was deeply religious,—will you inherit all he has given you in name, in reputation, in social position, and throw away all the *religious* elements which made him what he was?—Many a battle has been fought, even on the funeral day, for the perishable property which belonged to the dead man; what if there should be some emulation respecting the worship he offered to the God of heaven?—You would not willingly forego one handful of his material possessions; are you willing to thrust out his Saviour?—4. Your *father* could not live without God,—can *you*?—Your father encountered death in the name of the Living One. How do *you* propose to encounter the same dread antagonist?—When your father was dying, he said that God was the strength of his heart and would be his portion for ever.—He declared that but for the presence of his Saviour he would greatly fear the last cold river which rolled between him and eternity, but that in the presence of Christ that chilling stream had no terror for him.—When the battle approached the decisive hour, your father said "Thanks be unto God which giveth to us the victory,"—how do *you* propose to wind up the story of your pilgrimage?

A word must be spoken for the encouragement of a class which cannot but have its representatives in any ordinary congregation.—Some of you have had *no family religion*.—Your hearts ache as you turn to the past and remember the atheism of your household and the atheism of your training.—Not a single Christian tradition has come through your family.—To-day you are asking whether it be

possible for you to be saved.—I return an instant, emphatic, and impassioned YES to your heart's inquiry.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found!—Our relation to God is strictly *personal*.—Every heart must make its own decision in this grave matter.—See to it that, though you cannot speak of *your father's* God, yet your *children* shall be able to associate your name with the God and Saviour of mankind.

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"*I am the Lord that healeth thee.*"—

Exod. xv. 26.

Every man must have his own special revelation of God.—Some have never seen God in what may be called his metaphysical relations; they do not, in that sense, know God. Others know him in his relation to affliction, sorrow, and the whole of the enduring side of life. They cannot account for their deliverances except by a superior power. In their memory is the recollection of a pit out of which they were lifted, and they know of a surety that no arms could have delivered them from that pit but the arms of the Almighty One.—The infinity of true religion is thus shown by the infinity of the responses which it elicits from human nature.—One man's religion is all music—that is to say—an expression of thanksgiving, delight, and confidence in God. He has no argument, no logic, no well-connected and highly-authenticated history by which to defend himself, or on which to rest his Christian beliefs. He knows who came to him in the day of sorrow, who walked with him to the edge of the grave, who gave him heart again in the time of great loss and pain.—It is needless to argue with such a man; he is himself his own argument.—When the debater has ceased his storm of words, the man retires upon

his own consciousness, and in the recesses of his memory he finds a comfort which the war of words can never reach.—This is the kind of experience open to all men.—Few can be scholars, fewer still can be poets; to only one or two has it been permitted to enter into the holy of holies; but every life has had its own difficulty, or pain, or shadow, or cross—its own awful affliction or bitter poverty.—The Christian religion is strong upon every ground, but stronger, perhaps, on this ground than any.—Every one of its believers has his own story to tell respecting the richness of Christian comfort and the cheering of the Divine light.—Every man must base his argument upon the strongest point of his own consciousness.—Let the restored blind man say, “One thing I know”; let him keep steadily to that plain story, and no band of Pharisees, how infuriated soever by malice, can unsettle his position or disturb his serenity.

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*“Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud.”*

—EXOD. xix. 9.

This is a sample of God's daily visitation of the world.—God cannot come otherwise than in a thick cloud. The cloud is not necessary for him, it is necessary for those to whom he comes.—No man can see God and live.—Many a cloud that we blame is created for the purpose of tempering high light to our vision.—The darkness of the way is as much to be attributed to God as is the light.—He makes us stand still as well as go forward.—The cloud does not deprive us of the music of the voice.—Mere spectacle would do little for us; it is to the voice itself that we must pay heed.—Remember that the cloud only conceals God: it does not destroy

him.—Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

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*“I have talked with you from heaven.”*

—EXOD. xx. 22.

There is no mistaking heavenly music. Other voices may seem to rival it, but at points here and there it separates itself from all rivalry, and with an energy all its own appeals to human imagination.—A beautiful expression is this word, “I have talked”; it is full of simplicity and condescension; God is quite close to our ear and is conducting communication upon an almost equal level.—God sometimes thunders from heaven or causes the shining of his glory to dazzle the firmament so that no human eyes can gaze upon it.—With these dispensations we cannot interfere; it is when God “talks” with us that we may draw near and listen and ask questions and make replies.—We like to be talked to from heaven when we are in a right condition of mind; though the language is sublime it seems to appeal to something that is born within us. When we hear the heavenly speech, all earthly appeals become low and narrow and unworthy of us.—It is the same with the Book of God.—Once get into its spirit and enjoy the fellowship of its very heart, and all other books seem to be unworthy of the nature that is to be excited and hallowed by Divine communications.—God talks with us from heaven that he may lure us to heaven.—His purpose is never that we should be lower and meaner, but always that we should be higher and richer.—He stands up in the heavenly light to show us to what altitude we may rise.—It is not great superiority that is here indicated, it is a lesson to us of stimulus and

encouragement.—If God has spoken to us what has he said? Where is his word recorded?—Not a syllable of the Divine message should be lost.—Let us be misers in gathering up every tone and speech of God.

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*"The tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory."*—Exod. xxix. 43.

Not even by the beauty which God himself had designed; not by the curious carving and cunning work of the artists whose busy fingers had made the tabernacle; not by the presence of Moses and Aaron; not by the burning of incense, or the offering of beasts, or the lighting of lamps; not by learning, pomp, splendour; not by rich and ingenious ceremonialism; only by the direct presence and ministry of the Divine Being.—If we do not see the manifestation of God in the tabernacle, we see nothing that is worth looking at in the tabernacle.—We should insist upon hearing the Word of God, and knowing the meaning of that Word, as little human as possible, whether in speech, or in music, or in spectacle;—all these we certainly need, but we need them only as mediums or vehicles; they are nothing in themselves, except as they gather up and express the immediate and living and saving presence of God.

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*"Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat."*—Exod. xxx. 19.

But we thought Aaron and his sons were ministers? So they were; but ministers are not exempt from the great law of regeneration and purification.—The man must never be lost in the officer.—Aaron was to be treated as a sinner, and not as a priest only. Aaron could assume no personal su-

periority over his fellow rebels. He had a function to discharge, an official policy to pursue; but these did not take away his sin: his feet had also gone in the evil way, and his feet must be washed in the appointed laver.—This is a law of universal application to ministers, teachers, office-bearers, and leaders of men.—All mere snobbery, and self-assertion, and self-idolatry must be rebuked and condemned, and utterly driven out of the Church.—No man has any right in the Church except as he has washed in the true laver and become qualified by purity to stand in the inner place.—Wealth, considered merely as such, must be driven away; all social claim, prestige, influence, and the like, must be put down;—they have no right to be in the Church, unless they too have been washed in the appointed laver. Then they may come in, and wealth will be cleansed of its idolatry, and social influence will be humbled into heavenly modesty, and the great man shall be as the small man, and all shall be equal in the presence of God.

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*"And with him was——."*—Exod. xxxviii. 23.

Sometimes an age is gathered up into some one great representative name.—We do not always see the under-workers; we speak of the great man and forget the small one. The Bible is always just in this particular. It does not so raise up any one man as to deny to assistants and colleagues their mete of recognition and praise. God knows every worker, however obscure. He knows who put every knob and loop into the tabernacle which he is daily building.—It is enough for the obscure man that he should work with the leader's comrade. He feels pride in his association

with his great leader.—They could not exchange places.—There is a fitness of things in the allotment of service to different men, and of different men to different positions.—There should be no rivalry, envy, or bitterness: it is one tabernacle that is being built for the glory of one God, and therefore to have anything whatsoever to do with it, however humble, is honour enough for the greatest of men.—The greater the man the more ready will he be to recognise the assistance of others.—Inspiration is not to consummate in the direction of self-

worship, or even in the direction of splendid service; it takes in the co-operation, sympathy and assistance of others, and makes the most of them.—The life-tabernacle is a wondrous building; there is room for workers of all kinds in the uprearing of its mysterious and glorious walls. If we cannot do the greatest work, we may do the least: our heaven will come out of the realisation of the fact that it was God's tabernacle we were building, and under God's blessing that we were working.

END OF VOLUME II.

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